A Solution for Jealousy (Intro & Chapter 1)

renna-translations.tumblr.com/post/111059924234/a-solution-for-jealousy-intro-chapter-1

Last minute Valentine's Day present! Just like I did last year, I've started translating the novel adaption of HoneyWorks' "**Yakimochi no Kotae (A Solution for Jealousy)** " which is about Mochizuki Souta (nickname: Mochita), a third-year at Sakuragaoka High School, who holds long-standing unrequited feelings for her the air-headed pretty girl, Akari, who's the president of the Art Club. As the Art Club helps the Film Club with making a movie, he musters up the courage to confess, and she actually accepts?! But when they accidentally witness Natsuki and Haruki's "confession," things start to get complicated….?

Masterpost with links to all the translated chapters can be found here.
You can find the masterpost with all the Confession Rehearsal/Sound of Confession Project-related translations here.

Chapter 2→

* If you can, I highly encourage supporting the creators by buying the book for yourself at Amazon!

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introduction

'Has it already been three years since I last passed through this immigration gate…?'

Since graduating from high school seven years ago, I've only come back to Japan from America a handful of times.

Even after I'd graduated from college, I only came back to Japan to celebrate New Year's. But these past couple years, I've been too busy with a film project to even go back for that annual visit.

This time, I've been half-forced to come back to attend the wedding of a childhood friend.

'Natsuki's been calling to constantly remind me like she's been possessed by a demon, and Yuu and Mochita sent texts saying that they'd uncovered a video of my dark past and I'd better come and get it if I didn't want it sent to everyone…'

I'd already been planning to attend in the first place, but they pressured me to take time off before and after the ceremony too, just in case.

I know exactly why the three of them have been so persistent about this.

Even once I've come back to Japan, I don't contact anyone other than family, and haven't ever bothered to meet up with them.

'Although, it'd be more accurate to say that I couldn't *meet them…'*

I narrowed my eyes behind my sunglasses and looked at the single Boston bag of luggage I had with me.

I rummaged inside of it as I sat in a chair in the lobby and immediately found what I was looking for.

A thick, worn-out red notebook with the words, "Sakuragaoka High School Class 2-3, Aida Miou," written on the cover.

Each design captured a piece of the world with delicate brush work, just as neatly as the words on the cover were written.

"It doesn't feel like they were drawn very carefully, but just… naturally."

No matter how many times I looked at them, strangely, I never got tired of her works. Every time I turned the pages, it felt like the very first, but at the same time, nostalgia would sweep over me.

"….I wonder how she's doing."

I hadn't seen her since graduation, but I always remembered her with her gentle smile.

When I close my eyes, my memories of high school come back in vivid detail.

The memories of days where I couldn't pull through with my own feelings, but still always gave it my all.

—

Mochizuki Souta

Birthday: September 3
Horoscope Sign: Virgo
Blood Type: B

In the Film Club.
Sensitive, and is often teased by his friends.
He really likes Akari, but….

—

solution 1

"I have something to talk to you about. At 4:10 after school today, could you wait for me in this classroom?"

Catching Akari just after she'd come back from switching classes, Souta had his second conversation with her.

Although, Akari hadn't said anything in reply, so it was hard to call it an actual conversation.

Still, he was certain that she had nodded in answer to what he'd said.

Even after short homeroom and clean-up had ended, there was still time before their arranged meeting.

'I thought I'd leave some time to settle down before going, but it ended up having the opposite effect.'

He couldn't keep still, and kept glancing up at the clock.

After talking to Akari, he hadn't been able to focus on the lessons at all, and his heart just wouldn't stop pounding noisily.

'At this rate, it feels like I'll collapse before I even get to confess to Akarin….'

Bzzt, bzzzt—

"Uwah?!"

Souta jumped in his seat as the alarm he'd set on his phone went off.

"C-Crap… Feels like my heart's going to explode…."

The hand he held his phone with was shaking, making it difficult to turn off the alarm.

'Get it together, Souta. It's times like these that you've gotta keep calm….'

Closing his eyes, he breathed in and out, over and over again.

Akari's smile, which he always saw from a distance, crossed his mind.

Up until now, it had only been one time that she'd ever smiled directly at him.

Unless he mustered up his courage, he couldn't even hope for a chance of that happening ever again.

He patted his cheeks with hands that had gone cold from nerves.

‘Okay, I’m ready.’

Looking at the clock, he saw that hour hand was about to reach four.

It was still a little early, but he couldn’t make her wait when he’d been the one to call her out.

Souta started walking and headed for Akari’s class, the place for their meeting.

His heart pounded with each flight of stairs he went down, and each step he took through the halls.

By the time he was standing in front of the door, it felt almost painful.

‘Just a little longer, just need to hang on for a little longer.’

He pressed a hand to his chest and told his heart that seemed on the brink of exploding at any moment.

He glanced at his wristwatch, and saw that it was now 4:05.

‘Just five more minutes…’

He usually never paid it much attention, but right now, his heart was noisy with anxiety, uneasiness, anticipation, and a bunch of other emotions. It seemed that people fell in love not just with their head, but their entire bodies.

‘I want to change. I want to become strong enough to tell Akarin my feelings.’

Closing his eyes tightly, Souta said these words to himself for motivation.

He took one final deep breath, and reached out for the door.

‘Here I go.’

Sliding open the door that felt heavier than usual, he took that first step towards change.

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

‘Having to deal with this bright summer sun after pulling an all-nighter is torture….’

It was bad enough that he had soccer class on Monday mornings, but this blinding sunlight and heat were too much.

The consciousness of Mochizuki Souta, who had been watching DVDs until it was nearly dawn, was always fading away.

‘I knew I should have stopped after the first one…. Wait, I feel like that’s what I said last time, too.’

He knew the consequences, but he had also promised himself that once he pressed the play button, he wouldn’t move away from the TV until the movie ended, ending credits and all.

In any case, last night he had been watching the works from his favorite director, and had gotten sucked into watching several in a row.

A single love that lasts forever, they call that “unrequited love.”

The character from the movie had said this line during a pretty depressing scene.

Although the circumstances of the character from the movie were completely different from Souta's, for some reason, that line really struck him and remained lodged in the back of his heart.

'It's probably because of the fact that no matter who you are, love is something you just can't ignore once you've found it….'

He had a feeling that he'd just said something pretty good.

As Souta forgot all about the heat and his fatigue and nodded in satisfaction, someone slapped the back of his head with a clean "smack" sound.

"Mochita, do your job!"

Souta turned around, and soon heard the shout of the one who'd just given him such a clean smack on the head.

He immediately recognized the voice as Haruki's.

"You're only going to feel hotter if you shout like that, y'know."

Only after hearing Yuu try to calm down Haruki beside him did Souta finally realize what had happened.

'Crap, I missed a goal!'

Looking around the field, he saw that everyone was just standing around; the match had been put on hold. Seeing how the the ball had already been brought back to the center circle, it looked like it'd been a while since the goal had been scored.

'Ack, how long have I been spacing out for….?'

Quickly flipping the panel on the scoreboard, Souta hastily bowed in apology towards the court.

"Sorry! One point goes to Team A!"

"Took you long enough, geez! Well, I guess I can't blame you with this heat."

His classmate, Mimura Masahiro, flashed him a smile.

"Mahiron, you're so nice…!"

"But it happens again, you're taking over for my cleaning duties, got it?"

"Ehhh?! I-I'll be more careful from now on….!"

There was a roar of laughter all around as Souta panicked.

Thanks to his classmate backing him up, the unpleasant mood had vanished.

As Souta breathed a sigh of relief, Haruki looked over at him with a sharp gaze.

"….Mochita, if it's too hard on you, then say so, alright?"

"But I don't think Mahiron really meant it."

"I don't mean the cleaning duties. I mean if it's too hard even just standing there, just head to the infirmary."

"R-right…."

Overwhelmed by Haruki's forcefulness, Souta unconsciously lowered his gaze.

He knew full when that he was only saying those things out of concern, but whenever he heard Haruki's "sensible arguments" while he was already feeling down, it felt like he was being blamed. Was it because Haruki looked and sounded so confident in himself when he spoke?

"Haruki's right. If you're not feeling well, we'll carry you there right now."

As Yuu said this jokingly with a laugh, Haruki's eyes softened a little.

"Let me know when you do. I'll record it."

"Whaaat? But you're so picky about composition and all that. We'll have to keep redoing it until the pose meets your expectations. I'm not strong enough to keep carrying him for that long."

"Hah! Guess I'll be recording you being crushed from the weight, then."

Haruki finally laughed out loud after a mental picture of the scene formed in his head.

'Thanks, Yuu….'

In an instant, the topic had changed, and the mood between the three of them had lightened up.

Yuu was good at reading what the situation was, and balancing things out between people. He was like a cushion amongst his childhood friends, which consisted of himself, Souta, Haruki, and Natsuki.

'But that's exactly why I can't keep relying on him all the time…'

Souta took a deep breath and looked straight up at his two childhood friends.

"Sorry for worrying you two. But honestly, I'm fine now."

Haruki and Yuu looked like they wanted to say something else, but Souta ignored them and went on.

"In the first place, I already asked to switch places with scorekeeper because running around as the referee was too tiring, so I should at least do this job properly."

"….Alright. We believe you when you say you're fine."

"But as soon as you're not feeling okay, you have to tell us right away!"

Nodding firmly back at the two that believed in his words, he sent them back to the playing field.

'Ah, there's a bit of a cool breeze blowing….'

"Eh?! You don't like the prince type?"

He heard Natsuki's voice carried over by the wind.

Looking over, he saw the three of them chatting by the tennis courts. Miou and Akari were practicing swings with their rackets, but Natsuki was completely immersed in the conversation.

'Wah, it's Akarin! Her smile is so bright today, too…'

Long, glossy hair that almost reached her waist, and light, fair skin. Her bright laughter and almond eyes that were always sparkling had relentlessly captured Souta's heart.

No, it wasn't just him.

Hayasaka Akari was like the idol of Sakuragaoka.

She could be shy, but she never took a curt attitude.

With Natsuki and Miou, who she'd grown close to as classmates and fellow club members, she smiled bright like a sunflower. Another reason for her popularity was probably because she wasn't really conscious of how pretty she was.

In addition, Akari was also a regular finalist candidate in art contests.

Perhaps because of her artistic talent, apparently she had a unique sensitivity to things, as well. All these traits could classify her as being too "mysterious," but there were countless guys who secretly worshipped her smile from afar.

'But when I talked to her, I got to see her bashful face!'

It had happened nearly half a month ago, on the day that Souta had gone to the class next door first thing in the morning to return the dictionary that he'd borrowed from Natsuki.

He had bumped into Akari in front of the door, making him stop in his tracks.

It wasn't something to brag about, but he had never spoken to her even once before then. Just at the thought of her even looking at him was always enough to make his mind go blank.

He'd been about to hurry off, but "that" had caught his eye.

And as soon as he'd noticed it, for some reason, his mouth had just opened on its own——

"Good morning! Um, you have a bit of a bed head."

As Akari reached up to touch the back of her head in surprise, Souta lifted up his own bangs to show her where.

"It's… sticking up a bit…. like this…."

Most of his words trailed off towards the end. As soon as he realized who he was talking to, he couldn't get the words out like he'd planned them out in his head.

But it didn't end there. There was an ever bigger shock waiting for him.

Akari seemed to relax once she knew where the bed head was, and her expression softened.

And then, she pressed a long, slender finger to her lips and whispered,

"Don't tell anymore."

An electric current ran throughout Souta's whole body at her embarrassed face and voice.

Feeling like he was about to make some unwanted sound, he quickly covered his mouth with his hand. His reddened face went slack, and he silently muttered words that he absolutely couldn't let Akari hear.

'This is unreal! What is this adorable creature?! It's Akarin, Akariiin!'

Even remembering it now made his heart pound noisily.

Still, that was the last time he'd ever talked to Akari face-to-face.

He hadn't been able to use the opportunity to create the next one, and had wound up going back to watching her from afar.

'But I'm sure that that was a big step for me, no mistake!'

Looking up, he caught sight of Ayase Koyuki doing his best to chase after the ball.

They were in the same class, and he seemed like the type that was bad at sports, and definitely wasn't one to actively participate in matches during P.E. class. But recently, he often saw him running around the field with all his might.

'Keep at it, Yukki! It's one-sided, but somehow, watching you gives me courage.'

Like with "Akarin," Souta fondly called him "Yukki" in his mind, but they weren't actually very close or anything. Although they were in the same class, they only had the chance for direct confrontations during P.E. class or cleaning hours.

But even Souta's had noticed Koyuki's dramatic transformation.

Around July, Koyuki had changed his appearance drastically. He had cut his hair that made him look like a girl at first glance, and switched out his glasses for contacts.

"Ah, Ayase-kun? You cut your hair!"

Passed by Koyuki in the hallway, Akari smiled at him as she said this.

Souta, had been walking right behind Akari, remembered that he'd nearly crushed the milk box he'd been holding when he saw this happen.

After making sure that Akari had gone, he quickly approached Koyuki.

"You cut your hair, huh? ….So, what were you talking about just now?"

"Eh? Um, you mean with Hayasaka-san? Just the same thing you told me, Mochizuki-kun. About how I'd cut my hair…."

Although he looked surprised at the sudden question, Koyuki looked straight at Souta as he answered.

He'd been so busy seething with jealousy, he hadn't noticed it right away.

But now that he made direct eye contact with Koyuki, without his long bangs or glasses in the way, it made him catch his breath.

It made him wonder if they'd ever had the chance to talk like this before, face-to-face.

'He hasn't only changed his appearance, but his attitude, too.'

The only time he ever used to hear Koyuki's voice was when he was exchanging manga with Natsuki during break hours.

But even they seemed to be having a nice chat over a common hobby, he usually only heard Natsuki's voice, and whenever Koyuki spoke, it was only to comment on something that Natsuki had said. He was soft-spoken, and not very talkative.

That was the impression that Souta had of Koyuki.

However, after changing his appearance, he would initiate greetings on his own, and even raise his hand during class. He acted like a completely different person.

He was treated like an idol by some of the girls, and Souta would often see him surrounded by them during his Gardening Club activities. Although they could see that Koyuki was clearly bothered by this treatment, apparently they just found his reactions to be “So cute!”

At first, Souta had been confused, thinking it was a little too late to have changed himself for his high school debut, and too early for summer vacation.

But, he soon realized the reason for his transformation.

Koyuki was in love with Natsuki, and that was why he had changed himself.

’…That must be why Yukki looks at Natsuki the way he does.’

He looked at her in the warm and familiar way that you would towards friend, but there was a certain passion mixed in there as well.

Souta realized that he probably looked at Akari in the exact same way.

‘There was a poem like that in 100 Poems by 100 Poets*, wasn’t there? No matter how much you try to hide your feelings for someone, it shows up on your face right away.’*

Souta knew one other person that looked at someone in the same way.

He was sure that Natsuki had a crush on Yuu.

He also had a feeling that Yuu felt the same way towards Natsuki, but at the time, neither of them realized the fact that their feelings were mutual.

The two continued to have a frustrating relationship as mere childhood friends, growing neither closer together or farther apart.

Haruki and Miou often walked home together, but they didn’t seem to be dating, either.

Whenever he tried asking Haruki about it, he always just answered with something like, “We just get along for some weird reason.”

'As for Akarin… I haven’t really heard much.’

There had been countless courageous men who had confessed to Akari and been honorably rejected. There was even a rumor about a brave soul who had asked her, “Is there someone else you like?”

After thinking honestly about the question, she had tilted her head to the side and answered,

“Oh, I don’t really know.”

Souta looked over at the tennis courts behind him, where he saw Akari chatting cheerfully with the others while waiting for their turn to play.

Judging from the snippets of their conversation carried over by the wind, they were talking about which manga they recommended.

Natsuki must have gotten excited then, because for a moment, her voice was the loudest.

“Wait, so let me get this straight. Akari, the one that you start to have a crush on is your type?”

'Wha… Wh-wh-what good timing!'

Thanking Natsuki reverently in his mind, he focused all of his concentration in hearing every last word.

There was a short silence, and then he heard Akari’s soft voice loud and clear.

“Yeah, I guess so?”

'Ehhh?! The one that she starts to have a crush on is her type?! That’s the hardest type to figure out the strategy for….!'

Souta immediately held his head in defeat, but realizing something, he laughed bitterly.

How could he already be so shocked when he didn’t even have the courage to confess in the first place, and couldn’t even be counted amongst the competition yet.

‘Honestly, what a joke…. But, my feelings for her aren’t.’

He wasn’t going to wish for something as shameless as wanting Akari to like him back.

For now, he was fine as long as she didn’t already like someone else.

Realizing what he’d just thought, Souta became crest-fallen again.

Although he couldn’t wish for something unreasonable, instead, he wished for the worst thing he could wish against another person.

He couldn’t ever have anyone knowing the things he thought.

‘I’m such a weakling….’

He knew there was no point in comparing himself to someone else, but thinking about how much initiative Koyuki had, a self-scorning smile crept onto his face.

Fwee, fweeee—!

As if to cut him off from any further thoughts, the sound of the whistle rang out.

The first match was over, and preparations for the next match were starting. Haruki and Yuu changed the numbers hanging on their shirts and lined up at the center circle so that the referee could switch out the players.

“Mochita, hurry up and get over here! Today’s the day we beat Yuu once and for all!”

“That’s my line. Haruki, I’m not going to let you make even one shot.”

Souta waved back in response to his two childhood friends who had started their pre-match banter.

‘Instead of getting caught up in these messy thoughts, I should get moving!'

In a forced attempt to get his mind off of things, he went to join the others on the sunny field.

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

The two teams clashed with each other repeatedly, but with Yuu and Haruki being the main players and equally matched in strength, neither team was scoring any points.

The first half of the match had progressed without any decisive blows, and the second half was soon approaching.

'Ah, he intercepted the ball again! Looks like Haruki's in good condition today too.'

Yuu was on the offense while keeping a wide view of the opposing team's movements, but it was clear that Haruki's unpredictable moves were frustrating him.

"Akari, hold that position….!"

"Nacchan, that was so cool!"

It sounded like the next tennis match had started as well, and he could hear Akari's cheerful voice.

She was paired up with Natsuki for doubles, who was displaying outstanding reflexes and being excellent support for Akari.

'Akarin doesn't look like she's that good at sports, but she sure isn't cutting any corners…..'

Souta was so dazzled by the effort she was showing that he ended up watching her match instead of focusing on his own.

"Mochita, look up!"

"Heeey, watch out!"

"….Huh? What?"

Just as he was responding sluggishly to Yuu and Haruki's voices, it hit him.

"Gah….!"

The moment he looked up at the sky, the ball came flying right at Souta's face.

Pain seared through his nose, and losing his balance, he fell over on his back.

His vision was filled with stars, and tears started to form against his will.

'Ugh, this is so lame…'

There were roars of laughter all around him, and he could hear the voices of the girls from over at the tennis courts, too.

Now that such a commotion had started, he was sure that even Akari had noticed.

'To think that I was so captivated by the girl I like that I'd take a ball to a face…..'

Even if he couldn't shoot any goals, he was certain that he could have showed off with intercepting the ball, or making free kicks. Being hit in the face with the ball was nothing to be impressed about.

'It's probably punishment for wishing that the girl I like doesn't like someone else….'

Feeling more tears coming on, he hid his eyes with his hand.

Yuu and the others must have seen everything, as they spoke in rather cheerful voices.

“Don’t cry just from a face-block.”

It sounded like an offensive comment, but Souta knew Haruki’s real intentions. He was trying to make it sound like he was crying because of the pain from being hit with the ball.

“Yeah, that was some nice play!”

Yuu casually caught on as well, and held out his hand with words of encouragement.

Souta hesitated for a moment before deciding to take his hand.

“….Thanks.”

“Don’t mention it. Anyway, you’re actually pretty heavy. I don’t think I’ll be able to manage it on my own.”

‘Hm? Manage what?’

“….Guess I’ll lend a hand then.”

‘Hm? Lend a hand with what?’

He had a bad feeling about the conversation that Yuu and Haruki were having.

He was scared to ask, but if he just went along with it, who knew what they were going to do with him.

Ignoring the all-too-familiar warning signs, Souta hesitantly asked them,

“Um, you guys…. what exactly are you talking about?”

“Carrying you, duh.”

The two of them answered at the exact same time, and lifted Souta up in one quick movement.

Haruki was supporting the upper half of his body, with Yuu holding up his legs, and they were making a sound to imitate something taking off.

‘I-Isn’t this the pose… we’d always do to pretend to be airplanes when we were kids?!’

It was a lot of fun back then, but Souta was a third-year in highschool now.

Their classmates all roared with laughter as they watched the three of them.

“Oh shoot, Mochita’s being carried off!”

“Hey, I wanna try that too!”

Souta bit down on my bottom lip at the guys’ teasing.

‘Ugh, we’re attracting all this attention….’

Unable to stand it, he averted his gaze, and saw that the soccer ball that had assaulted his face had rolled off towards the tennis courts.

When the ball finally stopped moving, long, slender fingers wrapped around it to pick it up.

'A-Akarinnnn?!'

There was no way they'd make eye contact from so far away.

He knew this, but he still couldn't help looking away.

If, by any chance, she had a disgusted look on her face, he would never recover from that.

"…I'm so jealous of that ball…."

His true thoughts ended up spilling from his mouth.

But before those regretful words could reach anyone's ears, they were erased by the sound of Yuu and Haruki's footsteps.

Somewhat discouraged by this, an indescribable gloom spread in his chest.

'I'm so uncool….'

As if to allude to poor weather in the afternoon, cumulonimbus clouds were beginning to form overhead.

The stark contrast of blue and white only made his chest feel tighter.

A Solution for Jealousy (Chapter 2)

renna-translations.tumblr.com/post/122101278079/a-solution-for-jealousy-chapter-2

I know a lot of people have been looking forward to the next chapter, and I've finally gotten around to finishing it! Here's the second chapter of the novel adaption of HoneyWorks' "**Yakimochi no Kotae (A Solution for Jealousy)** "!

Masterpost with links to all the translated chapters can be found here.
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* If you can, I highly encourage supporting the creators by buying the book for yourself at Amazon!

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Serizawa Haruki

Birthday: April 5
Horoscope Sign: Ram
Blood Type: A

Natsuki's childhood friend.
In the Film Club.
Has talent as a director,
He's passionate and acts cool.

___

solution 2

The following Monday, the weather forecast displayed the symbols for sunshine relentlessly covering the entire map.

Sakuragaoka High School also suffered from the fierce heat; the classrooms without air conditioning felt like saunas.

'No good, I can't process any of this….'

Souta gave up on trying to make sense of the sentences before him and collapsed on his desk, which had already accumulated a considerable amount of heat.

Since they were due soon, he had planned on avidly reading his book in the club room during the lunch break, but at this rate, the pages were only going to get soaked with sweat.

Still, the reason that he'd come straight here was because this room was like a "castle" for Souta and the others.

It had been during the fall of their first year in highschool that the classroom at the end of the top floor, which was being used as a storage room at the time, had turned into the club room for the Film Club.

After being so taken by the short film that Haruki had secretly published on the internet, Souta and Yuu had started the Film Club because of how much they wanted Haruki to make the next one.

The following year, several first-years who had also seen Haruki's short film joined as well, and they were acknowledged as an official club. All the while, Haruki's movies continued to win awards; his movies showed rapid improvement, leading the school to give them a decent sum as their club budget.

And most recently, Haruki had mentioned that a short film compilation of his was going to be exhibited at some competition, so it was safe to say that there would be more trophies and certificates filling up the shelf in their clubroom soon.

That was just how talented Haruki was at making movies.

'….I wonder how far my screenplays will go?'

Souta looked at the scattered papers on the desk, and asked himself the question he'd already heard so many

times.

The ones that usually asked were the judges of the competition. For that reason, he knew that he had to complete this project, but no matter what, he just couldn't finish it.

At first, he'd only wanted to watch Haruki's movies.

In order to fulfill that wish, they'd started a club to set a stage, and they had been there simply for the sake of assisting Haruki make the movies that he envisioned.

But that had all changed during the winter of their second year, when the three of them had decided to make a movie together to commemorate their graduation.

It'd been difficult deciding on a theme that appealed to all three of them.

In the end, it had been because of Haruki's final word of authority that they'd decided to go with Souta's idea to do a love story.

"I've never filmed one before, but why not give it a shot?"

At first, Yuu, who liked big Hollywood films and comedy movies, had a hard time warming up to the idea, but he wound up agreeing once seeing Haruki's passion.

Once they actually started working on the movie, it was Haruki and Souta whose opinions conflicted the most.

Haruki, who was a fan of independent, edgy films, hated having to rely on dialogue to tell the story. He was a firm believer of getting the viewers to empathize and relate with the characters in the movie.

On the other hand, Souta watched movies of many different genres, and of those, he loved romance movies the most. He was the type to collect the screenplays and DVDs of his favorite works.

However, he saw himself as a fan of watching movies, and didn't have much faith in being the one to make one himself.

But as Souta argued his opinions against Haruki's, he realized something about his own feelings.

The reason he liked romance movies so much was because they depicted "things that can't be put into words" so well.

And the reason that he'd buy the screenplays for them was because he also wanted to try writing one.

Because of those reasons, he met with with strong opposition from Haruki when their opinions on how to do the final scene differed.

"It'd be so cheesy to use dialogue for the ending."

"I get what you mean. But if you don't use words to convey those important feelings, I don't think it'll tie up well."

Haruki scratched his head when hearing Souta's rebuttal.

“Like I said, it’d have more impact without actually having them say the words, ‘I like you’ or ‘I love you.’”

“That’d be one way of doing it, but I think it’d work better to have it said as dialogue for this one. Like the words that he left behind for the heroine, kind of like a goodbye letter.”

Neither of them would yield from their stances, to the point that Yuu admitted with a laugh that he’d even felt a little scared.

At the end of their long discussion, Haruki wound up accepting Souta’s suggestion.

“Maybe I just haven’t been paying enough attention to words,” he said with a carefree smile.

‘It’s that ability to gracefully accept other people’s opinions that really makes him like a director.’

Since Souta’s suggestion had been because of his true feelings, he’d gotten a bit stubborn about it towards the end.

But from beginning to end, Haruki didn’t stick with his own opinion.

Since he was motivated by the sheer want to create a good product, it was almost like he didn’t care whose idea it was that they used. That was why he didn’t try so hard to push his own opinion. If he thought a suggestion was a good one, he would honestly agree to it, and didn’t hesitate to compliment it, either.

Haruki had a clear idea of what he wanted.

As well as an unyielding confidence.

Even if he accepted other people’s opinions, there was an unchanging fundamental in his filmmaking.

‘That’s probably what I’m lacking.’

It was because of the fact that something wasn’t easily attainable that he’d gain confidence from finally making it his own. Once that happened, that would probably be the first time he’d be able to stand proudly before Akari.

They had a meeting with the Art Club after school.

They’d decided that they were going to ask Natsuki and the others to help them with the picture they’d use for their graduation movie, and this meeting was for picking who would be drawing it. Although, they had needed to go the advisers for permission first.

‘….This is my chance. It’s times like this that I need to have the ‘love is like a shark; it dies if it stops moving’ mentality.’

Remembering this quote from a movie he’d seen before, Souta invigorated himself.

It was time to put an end to simply being jealous of someone else.

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

After short homeroom ended, Souta and the others immediately headed for the art preparation room, the place of their meeting.

They could have waited in the room until Matsukawa-san, the Art Club adviser, gave them her permission, but since

he had feeling that'd just make him more anxious, he decided to wait out in the hallway with Yuu and Haruki.

'….I wonder how long until we know if it's fine or not.'

He was more restless than the others, but he endured it in silence.

Rather than a cool breeze, the open window instead let in a loud chorus of cicadas.

"Ah, a jet stream."

Haruki, who was staring out the window, was the first to speak after they'd been waiting for several minutes.

Blocking out the sun with his hand, Souta also looked up at the bright sky.

"With the sky this blue, you can see it really clearly, huh?"
"Right? It kinda looks like a line left by a giant white brush."
Haruki glanced beside him, as if seeking agreement, but Yuu, the person in question, didn't seem to be all there. Although he was also looking out the window, his mind seemed to be elsewhere, rather than on the scene that spread out before his eyes. Oblivious to Haruki and Souta's eyes on him, he let out a melancholy sigh.

'Come to think of it, hasn't Natsuki also been like this since this morning…?'
The two were next-door-neighbors, and often went to each other's houses.
He'd heard that even now that they were in high school, they always spent Saturdays at someone's house studying or playing games, so maybe something had happened then.

'It's probably best if I don't try to stick my nose where it doesn't belong.'

Glancing over at Haruki, he returned his gaze.

When their eyes met, Haruki only gave a helpless shrug.

Souta answered with a forced smile and faced the window again.

After a while, a buzzing noise echoed through the hallway.

"Ah, it's from Natsuki."

Haruki and Souta turned around with a start at Yuu's words.

As they waited with bated breaths, Yuu soon struck a victory pose.

"Alright! She said that Matsukawa-sensei gave us the OK!"

"Seriously?! That's awesome!"

"Now we can have them draw for us without having to be all sneaky."

Souta sighed with relief, and Haruki and Yuu also nodded with relieved faces.

Now that the Art Club adviser had given their official permission, that secured them a place to draw the pictures.

And more importantly, they didn't need to hide what they were doing from the school.

In particular, Akari and Miou boasted a nearly perfect award record.

Although Haruki had also won awards before, since the Film Club hadn't been around for very long, they'd imagined that it would have been more difficult to get permission to take up Akari and the others' time with activities that wouldn't directly affect their reputation.

'Matsukawa-sensei sure is nice to have gotten us permission from the school in spite of that.'

He was sure that Natsuki and the others had put in a word that they'd continue with their regular Art Club activities, as well.

He straightened himself up, realizing that he'd need to brace himself now more than ever to focus on making the movie.

Haruki and Yuu seemed to feel the same way, reconfirming his feelings.

"A movie really isn't something you can make on your own, huh,"

Yuu muttered, moved by the emotion of the moment, to which Haruki nodded in agreement to with a serious face that he rarely ever wore.

"I'm thankful to the viewers, of course, but also the people that lend a hand in the movie's production. It'd probably be exaggerating a little to say that they're the ones I'm filming for, but I want to repay them somehow through film."

Haruki spoke in a calm, gentle tone, without sounding worked up.

These were unmistakably his true feelings, and it was clear that the words he spoke weren't fake in any way.

'I wonder how Haruki thinks….'

Next to Souta, who stood rooted to the spot as if his heart had been touched too much to move, Haruki suddenly gasped.

He seemed to have realized something, his eyebrows knitting together all of a sudden in a thoughtful expression.

Before Yuu and Souta, who were both wondering what it could be, Haruki muttered in a low voice.

"Hey, don't you think it's really hot today?"

"….Come again?"

The moment he finished talking, Haruki started to rummage through the bag hanging off his shoulder.

Yuu also seemed to have missed the timing to say anything in reply, and could only watch him with a blank expression.

The thing he took out was the handheld fan that he'd been bragging about during lunch. With the fact that it could be used without having to be plugged into an outlet or USB port being its selling point, Haruki wasted no time in turning it on.

'I think I know what this is. Probably his usual way of hiding his embarrassment?'

The first time he'd won an award, the only thing Haruki had said was, "Filmmaking's just one of my hobbies."

Despite the fact that he'd get so immersed in it that he'd forget to eat and sleep.

Haruki was the kind of guy that thought it uncool to reveal whatever was "offstage," even outside of film, and didn't like showing himself giving effort. In the first place, it was only the people around him that saw it as "effort," while Haruki probably only thought of it as "what should obviously be done."

"…That's way too cool, seriously…."

The words that had unconsciously slipped out of Souta's mouth had apparently been heard by the person in question.

He tilted his head in confusion at first, but soon after, he gave a shout, his eyes sparkling. He must have understood Souta's statement in a different context, as he was now holding the fan out proudly.

"Right? I even customized it here and there. I painted it this color myself, too."

"Huh? It wasn't red to begin with?"

While Souta was genuinely surprised by that fact, Yuu hesitantly continued.

"Don't tell you, you made it that color hoping it'd rotate three times faster?"

Souta had some idea about what anime he was referencing with that, but he didn't really think that Haruki would be so cheesy.

However, Haruki answered in an almost sing-song tone,

"Bingo!"

"How dumb!"

Yuu and Souta laughed together, while Haruki retorted firmly in disagreement.

"You're supposed to complimenting me for how much attention I pay to details, right?"

"That's paying *too* much attention! Who'd even bother to paint all those small parts~"

As Yuu laughed with a broad grin, Souta and Haruki started laughing along as well.

While they stood around laughing, they heard footsteps approaching from down the hall.

Looking up, they saw Natsuki waving at them.

"Thanks for waiting!"

"Yo. Sorry to take up your time when you're all busy preparing for the contest."

"If you're really sorry, then at least treat us to something to drink."

Haruki and Natsuki spoke to each other as they usually did, but today, Akari and Miou were here as well.

If it was only Natsuki, who was their childhood friend, there was no need to be modest now, but it was different for the other two. Considering that they'd set aside their time just to meet with the Film Club, it was a given that they show their gratitude.

"Ah, that's right. Sorry, we should have thought of that….!"

Haruki waved his hand in the air as Mochita started to head for the vending machines.

"Mochita, you're such a nice guy. You don't have to do whatever Natsuki says, you know."

"You really are a nice person, Mochita. But it's fine to just let Haruki take care of this kind of thing."

It was just after Natsuki replied to Haruki's jest that they heard Yuu deliberately clear his throat and then speak in a frosty tone.

Haruki, and Natsuki, too, would you two quit it for a minute? Can't you see that you're leaving out Hayasaka and Aida?"

At Yuu's words, Souta saw that Miou and Akari, who had come a little later, were standing there looking a bit lost.

Along with the fact that Haruki and Natsuki were childhood friends, they got along extremely well. Miou and Akari seemed uncertain about when to jump into the conversation between them, but they also seemed just generally overwhelmed by how quickly it was moving.

'Akarin looks so cute with that surprised face….'

Although he knew that this wasn't the time for it, Souta's eyes were glued on Akari.

Every slight movement she made caused his heartbeat to accelerate, and his face burn hotter.

Suddenly feeling someone's gaze on him, he was pulled back to reality by Natsuki's panicked voice.

"S-Sorry! I didn't mean you two hanging."

Natsuki unlocked the door to the preparation room, and urged Miou and Akari to go inside.

Yuu followed after them, but Haruki seemed to remember something and stopped short.

"I'm thirsty now after talking so much. Mochita, let's go."

Haruki turned around and looked up at Souta's face.

He realized then that the gaze he'd felt earlier had been Haruki's.

'He's probably wondering if I'm alright, with my face so red….'

Haruki and Yuu were completely aware of Souta's feelings for Akari, to the point that there was no need to try and hide them.

This was probably his chance to take hold of this lifeline that Haruki had thrown him and recompose himself.

“R-Right!”

‘Ahhh, my voice got so high!!!’

It’d be totally obvious now that he was nervous.

Stealing a glance at Akari and the others, he saw that the three girls were standing with confused faces.

Unable to stand being there any longer, Souta ran off in escape.

“Ah, hey, wait!”

“….Well, that’s that, so we’ll just go in first.”

Hearing the sound of Haruki chasing after him, and Yuu settling the situation, he let out a sigh of relief.

But right after, tears of regret started to come forth.

‘Ahh…. I ended up needing help again….’

He knew exactly what the emotion swirling around in his chest was.

It was self-pity.

“….Ughh, I won’t lose.”

“To who?”

Haruki, who was now walking next to him, asked.

He wasn’t the slightest out of breath, and had the usual aloof air about him.

‘In times like these, Haruki isn’t the type to scold by saying, ‘Don’t make me have to chase after you like that.’ And just now, too. I was talking to myself, but he didn’t tease me about it….’

“Heeey, are you even listening?”

“Ah, yeah! I was just thinking that I won’t lose to myself.”

Haruki raised an eyebrow at Souta’s answer.

“Thinking about complicated things again, huh?”

“Huh? Is it really? Isn’t thinking about not losing to yourself a pretty common thing?”

“Well, it is, but it’s not something that simple, you know? Actually, I think it’s more confusing to say that happens to just anyone.”

Unable to grasp what Haruki was trying to say, Souta’s pace naturally slowed down.

Haruki also slowed down his pace beside him, and he spoke in a languid tone, as well.

“Normally, the more experience you have, the easier it is for you to figure out how to solve a problem or avoid making mistakes, right? But the fact that there’s people that keep messing up despite having so much experience is

what makes it a complicated problem.”

“….Ah, I see….”

He felt like he’d just been given an important hint.

As Souta chewed over the words in his head, Haruki patted him on the shoulder.

“So that’s why you shouldn’t waste so much time just thinking it over. You should try just acting on the spot, or going with your gut, you know?”

A famous line drifted up from the back of Souta’s mind.

It matched Haruki’s style perfectly, something that Souta lacked.

“So, just don’t think?”

“Yeah, exactly!”

Haruki grinned, and patted Souta roughly on the back.

Somehow cheered up by this atmosphere, Souta patted Haruki’s back in return.

“Ow! Mochita, you don’t have to do it so hard, you know.”

“That’s my line!”

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

By the time they returned to the preparation room carrying water bottles, Yuu had finished explaining the basics to Natsuki and the others.

“That said, it’s Haruki, the director, who has the clearest vision out of all of us.”

Although Haruki grumbled, “How out-of-character!” when prompted by Yuu, he continued,

“The setting is that the heroine, who’s never been in love before, starts showing changes in her art after meeting the protagonist. We want to appeal to the viewers by using pictures to show the delicate, and subtle changes in the heroine’s feelings towards the protagonist.”

There was no hesitation in Haruki’s voice as he spoke.

Speaking without faltering, it was clear that he was the “director.”

Natsuki and the others blinked, overwhelmed, and turned to look at one another. Both Akari and Miou were completely silent as well, too stunned to make a single sound throughout Haruki’s explanation.

Sensing the tense atmosphere, Yuu looked around at the three girls.

At that moment, Haruki suddenly threw out a question.

“Say, what color do you think love is?”

‘There it is! The unhittable pitch!’

Souta couldn’t help screaming in his mind, feeling like his consciousness was fading away.

It was unclear what train of thought led him to it, but Haruki had abruptly asked that ridiculous question.

They would later learn that he’d had a specific intention when he’d asked that, but at the moment, practically everyone was at a loss with this out-of-context question.

“Huh? What color…?”

The first person to react was Natsuki, who was the most accustomed to this behavior out of the two other childhood friends.

But even Natsuki didn’t have a clear grasp on the intent behind Haruki’s question. The reply and gaze that Natsuki gave Haruki was meant for trying to search for his true intent.

However, Haruki simply stared right back at Natsuki.

‘At this rate, no one’s going to have anything to say, much less the answer….’

Natsuki, who was just as nervous as Souta was, seemed to have realized Haruki’s methods.

“….Pink, I guess?”

As Natsuki said the first color that came to mind when picturing love, Haruki gave a strong nod.

Miou, as if encouraged by that response, also spoke up hesitantly,

“Love can sometimes be bitter, or painful, so I think blues and blacks would be used, too.”

Haruki nodded with interest again, and lastly, looked at Akari.

“What do you think, Hayasaka?”

“I’d say…. gold, I guess.”

The moment Souta heard Akari’s answer, he was so shocked that he forgot to breathe.

Hearing Yuu mutter, “What?” beside him brought him back to his senses.

Looking around, he saw that Natsuki and Miou were also motionless with surprise.

Haruki was the only one whose eyes sparkled, resting his hands on the desk and leaning forward in interest.

“What makes you think that?”

“It pretty, and shiny, but it rusts when you leave it alone for too long, right? And when it shines too brightly, it can be blinding, so I think that’s similar to how love can be.”

In the first place, it was silver that rusts, not gold, and it was difficult for either to oxidize, anyway.

Souta bit down on his lip, resisting his urge to make that kind of comeback.

It would have been an insensitive comment, given the situation, but the reason that made him hold back most of all was the expression on Haruki’s face.

He looked truly happy, from the bottom of his heart.

“Oh…? I never thought I’d meet someone that thinks the same way as me.”

Those words just now had been the decisive blow.

It was certain that they would end up using Akari’s art.

Yuu must have felt the same way, but he seemed intent on going through the process in order.

“So that’s the general idea.… For the time being, would you mind showing us some of your actual works?”

‘Ahh, he said ‘for the time being.”

Souta was quick to catch the unsteadiness in Yuu’s words.

Natsuki seemed to have noticed as well, and her expression noticeably stiffened. But instead of blaming Yuu, she responded with deliberate cheerfulness.

“We’ll bring a few different things, like oil paintings, and sketches.”

Miou and Akari nodded as well, and they disappeared into the art room next door.

‘Haruki probably doesn’t find anything unpleasant about this situation….’

Even while they were waiting for Natsuki and the others to return, Haruki’s eyes still sparkled, unable to hold back his excitement.

On the other hand, Yuu seemed to be in the same frame of mind as Souta, and held a complex expression.

‘That’s right, he’s finally realized the weight of this situation….’

From the beginning, they’d only been planning to pick someone who could draw for them, but in reality, they could only pick one person out of the three.

Since Haruki was used to assessing his own works, he was probably rather lax when it came to reviewing the works of other people.

As for Souta, if he was the one exhibiting something, it was still bearable, but he was reluctant to be part of the ones judging the works of others.

‘We asked them to do this so casually, but I hope Natsuki and the others are alright.’

While they had a lot of experience with entering contests as members of the Art Club, it was probably their first time competing against, and having their works judged right in front of each other.

Although they were doing this to help the Film Club, along with the fact that the judges were people they knew and that there wasn’t going to be a prize, there was a high chance that just the fact that only one of them would be be chosen had created an unpleasant atmosphere between them.

‘What should we do? It’d be weird if we just suddenly cancelled it right now….’

While he couldn’t think of how to fix this problem, it was hard to overlook now that he’d realized it.

Just as he’d decided to at least discuss it with Yuu and Haruki and was starting to get up from his chair, the door

opened.

“Sorry for the wait. We’ll line them up on the desk, so could you make some room?”

“Got it. Let us know if you need any help.”

Having answered Natsuki instinctively by accident, Souta gulped.

But it was already too late now. As he watched Natsuki and the others speedily make preparations from the corner of his eye, all he could do now was stand off to the side with Yuu and Haruki.

It was pretty impressive seeing all their works lined up in a row on top of the wood, working desk.

‘I don’t have much artistic taste, and I don’t know anything about technique, but….’

The one that caught his eye was the vivid watercolor painting in front of him.

Since Souta always chose music classes as his elective, he rarely got to see the artwork done by Natsuki and the others. The only times he got to see them were when they won awards and were hung around the school afterwards, or when they were showcased at the Culture Festival.

‘But even so, it’s funny that you can still kind of tell who drew which ones.’

“Now presenting the first contestant, Enomoto Natsuki!”

As the air filled with tension, Natsuki energetically introduced herself.

And just as Souta had expected, she pointed out the watercolor painting in from of him as her own.

“The expressions in the characters you draw are really lively. That’s the kind of thing I like to see.”

Surprisingly, the very first one to give feedback was Haruki.

Natsuki also had her mouth agape in surprise, and wasn’t able to give any other reaction.

Finding this rather amusing, Souta continued.

“Also, the colors are really nice.”

“Yeah. The composition’s good too, so it really feels complete, you know?”

As he tried to keep his comments objective, Yuu’s face was bashful like his own.

‘He sure is easy to read… But the person he’s doing this for probably hasn’t noticed.’

Looking over at Natsuki with a wry smile, they heard a high-pitched voice ring out.

“W-Wow! You all sound like real art critics making comments like that!”

Natsuki seemed a bit stressed by how forced their compliments sounded.

I’m happy to hear them, but…!

Souta couldn’t help but burst out laughing at how her entire body seemed to be screaming those words.

Yuu and Haruki started laughing as well, and Natsuki’s face reddened.

As she stood there dumbfounded, Haruki suddenly stretched out his hand.

“It was an honest compliment, you know. It’s not often that I get the chance to give them, after all.”

Natsuki let out a yelp as he ruffled her hair a little roughly. As if that had acted as the trigger, her tone became light-hearted again, as if breaking free of sleep paralysis.

“Ehh? You should praise me more on a regular basis!”

‘Ah, she’s back to her normal self.’

Feeling half relieved, and half impressed at how well he’d lightened the mood, Souta couldn’t help laughing again. As he gradually started laughing more genuinely, it caught on to Akari and Miou as well.

It was clear that the tension that had filled the room earlier was quickly dispersing.

“….Alright, that’s enough with the flirting.”

Yuu’s low mutter fell upon the peaceful atmosphere.

Confusion rapidly filled the space between them, like a bucket of paint that had been spilled on the floor.

“Huh?”

Natsuki didn’t seem to process the intent of his remark, and was frozen on the spot.

Haruki, the other party in question, seemed to have clearly understood Yuu’s feelings. His eyebrows were furrowed, making a face like he’d been caught in the act of something.

Met with this sudden, unpleasant silence, Akari and Miou looked on in confusion.

‘In times like these, I have to do something….’

It was obvious that the feelings that Haruki had for Natsuki were only those of a childhood friend, but there was still a slight chance that Miou would misunderstand.

If that happened, her relationship with Haruki would become complicated.

“Th-Then, next up is Aida-san.”

Souta forcefully changed the topic to do away with the unpleasant atmosphere.

He looked at Miou’s works, which were displayed next to Natsuki’s, and commented, “They’re very delicate drawings.” Yuu and Haruki followed suit, and once more, a peculiar tension filled the room.

However, the relief lasted for only a fleeting moment before the room was chilled again, this time by Haruki’s remark.

“Don’t the expressions seem kind of stiff?”

Unlike his positive comments towards Natsuki’s works earlier, Haruki’s comments on Miou’s works were harsh.

Naturally, Souta was taken aback by his unreserved statement, and even Yuu seemed surprised.

“I’d say it’s more like they look very well-defined, you know?”

“Oh, there’s landscapes, too.”

Despite the other two's efforts to bring up the good points, Haruki had only sharp words to say.

"The technique is good and all, but… they feel more like references."

They were frank opinions, the type of opinion that Haruki usually gave.

Souta knew that there was no resentment in those words, but to actually be the one hearing them was a different story. It was like being splashed with cold water in the dead of winter, and the words hurt most because of the fact that they didn't have any ill intent behind them.

'This isn't good.'

Miou was looking down now, and Natsuki and Akari, who stood on either side of her, were looking at her in worry.

Yuu wasn't blaming Haruki head-on either, but he was still shooting daggers at him.

'The girls are still here, so they won't go starting an argument, will they….?'

As he glanced uneasily between the two of them, Haruki was already looking at Akari's pieces.

Unlike with Haruki and Miou, he stared at them silently.

The other members noticed this too, and everyone's eyes focused in on a single painting.

'Ah, this is the first piece that Akari won an award for!'

Souta's heartbeat accelerated the moment he set his eyes on the oil painting laid out on the desk.

Since it had been sent to be shown at other schools and exhibitions for so long, it'd been a while since he'd seen the real thing before his eyes like this.

Just like the title, "The Cherry Blossoms of Someday," said, cherry blossoms bloomed in full glory across the canvas.

It had been about two years ago that he'd fallen in love at first sight with the painting that, while illuminated by the bright sunlight, seemed somehow melancholy, as well.

At that time, he'd still just been part of the Going Home Club, with nothing particularly eventful in his new high school life.

He didn't have a part-time job, or go to cram school or anything. He just went straight home after school and watched his favorite movies.

Although those mundane and repetitive days kept him from having any hardships, it was like standing in lukewarm water.

'But that's when I came across this painting.'

It had been right before summer vacation, one day after school in July.

After he'd gone back to the classroom to get the assignment he'd left in his desk, he had passed through the hallway in front of the art room.

The red ribbon and the words, "Congratulations on Honorable Mention," that accompanied it, had caught his eye.

It had been commemorated during a schoolwide assembly, so he'd known that the winner had been a first-year, just like him. Recalling what it was, he'd glanced over at the canvas casually, and caught his breath with how moved he was.

'Through her art, I fell in love with Akarin for the second time.'

The first time had been the day of the entrance ceremony.

Ever since his heart had been firmly captivated by Akari's smile, Souta had never stopped chasing her with his eyes.

He didn't have the courage to talk to her at all, and after the ceremony had ended, Natsuki had run up to her shouting, "Cute girl sighted!" but he'd only been able to watch her go.

And he soon learned that she wasn't *just* cute.

When he'd seen the nameplate underneath the picture frame reading "Hayasaka Akari," he'd been filled with admiration, finding her somehow similar to Haruki. Apparently, it *was* possible for one person to be blessed by the heavens with more than just one talent.

'From my point of view, those two are like stars….'

Of course, they were like stars themselves, but the things they created were also like stars that shone in the heavens.

All Souta could ever do was admire them from below.

"Looks nice."

The words that Haruki muttered pulled Souta back to reality.

In the end, just as expected, it was decided that Akari would be the one to draw the pictures.

They hadn't decided it by voting, but by the decision of the director, Haruki.

Although Akari was the one who had been nominated, she had become completely shy. Seeing her peeking out from behind Natsuki, Souta was struck by a strange obligation to protect her.

"Um, Serizawa-kun…."

'Aaaaah?! Akarin! Damn, she's so cute!'

Hearing her sweet voice, Souta felt a needle inside of him sway drastically, on the verge of snapping.

That meter was probably labeled with something like "My Ideal" or "Something Important to a Person".

'I would've been more happy if it was my name she'd called, though…. No, I can't wish for something so luxurious. I'll settle for being able to witness this sight from up close.'

As he waited expectantly for what would come next, Akari braced herself and took a step forward.

"Could you tell me a bit more about the movie? Otherwise, I won't fully understand the heroine's feelings, and it might be hard to convey the right mood in the pictures."

"Convey the right mood, huh… Yeah, these two things go hand-in-hand."

Although he hadn't outright said anything, it was obvious just by looking at the smile on Haruki's face. He looked happy to have found someone that shared his point of view, and the same artistic values.

'I guess stars are really just attracted to other stars… huh.'

It would be jumping to conclusions to consider what had sprouted between them to be the same as romantic feelings.

But it wasn't impossible, which was what made him worry.

'Even if that does even up happening, it's not like I can do anything about it.'

As he let out a quiet sigh, he heard someone else sigh as well.

Souta moved only his eyes to look for who it was, so that the other members wouldn't notice.

'Ah, I knew it….. Aida-san's worried, too.'

Underneath her short bangs, the image of her two "friends" was reflected in her unsteady eyes.

One was the person she had feelings for, and the other was the person that might become her rival one day. There was no proof that this would ever happen, but there was also the possibility that it might happen at a moment's notice.

Peoples' feelings are unpredictable; even though you know it won't come true, you still can't help but wish for it.

'I wish I could just have you all for myself….'

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

The screening meeting had concluded in about an hour.

'It felt really long, but as a same time, really short….'

For Souta, it had certainly been intense, in many ways.

'Yuu must be tired, too.'

Although they'd settled the matter about the movie's pictures, they still had a pile of things to do.

The club president, Yuu, had gone back to their room to start making adjustments to the scenario and schedule. In order to divide up their work schedule, he was comparing the timetable to his smartphone, trying to sort out the rough estimates that the director, Haruki, had given them.

"Then, we'll do filming during summer vacation, and…. Ah, Natsuki sent a text."

Haruki furrowed his brows when Yuu showed him the screen of his smartphone.

"She wants to know about the next meeting, huh? Well, we've already told them what we're looking for, so I don't think we really need to meet up again anytime soon. We can just leave the rest to Hayasaka for now."

It sounded just like the type of reply that Haruki would give; it might sound like he was neglecting them, but he was really just trying to give them freedom with their actions.

Yuu understood his intentions as well, and gave a firm nod.

“Got it. I’ll tell Natsuki that.”

“Thanks.”

As Haruki got up from his seat after saying this, Souta said to him,

“Aida-san isn’t coming today, huh.”

“….What?”

There was a hint of annoyance in Haruki’s reaction.

It went without saying for Souta, who was the one who had said it, but even Yuu, who was watching from the side, went pale.

“Ah, I mean, it’s started raining outside. If Aida-san isn’t coming, I just thought it’d be a good idea if you went to meet her soon. The clouds look dark, so it’s probably going to rain harder.”

As Souta quickly came up with an explanation, Haruki’s expression relaxed.

“If she hasn’t texted me by now, she’s probably going home with Natsuki and Hayasaka today.

“….Oh, okay.”

Haruki’s eyes looked sad as he stared at his cell phone, and Souta refrained from saying any more.

‘I’m so stupid. I can’t guess how other people are feeling….’

Haruki might not be saying anything, but he was probably still worried about what had happened during the meeting. He probably thought that he’d hurt Miou.

But, why then? Why had he said it like that?

If he thought that he’d hurt her, it wasn’t too late to go and apologize now.

He must have been thinking a lot of things, but in the end, Haruki didn’t say anything. Everyone had things that they wanted to say, but couldn’t put into words.

The cries of the cicadas changed to the sound of raindrops hitting the window until the last school bell rang.

A Solution for Jealousy (Chapter 3)

renna-translations.tumblr.com/post/124529243484/a-solution-for-jealousy-chapter-3

Thanks for waiting! Here's the third chapter of the novel adaption of HoneyWorks' "**Yakimochi no Kotae (A Solution for Jealousy)**"!

Masterpost with links to all the translated chapters can be found here.
You can find the masterpost with all the Confession Executive Committee/Sound of Confession series-related translations here.

←Chapter 2 | Chapter 4→

* If you can, I highly encourage supporting the creators by buying the book for yourself at Amazon!

—

Setoguchi Yuu

Birthday: July 11th
Horoscope Sign: Cancer
Blood Type: AB

Souta's childhood friend.
In the Film Club.
Something seems to have between him and Koyuki involving Natsuki….?

—

solution 3

Sweat dripped onto the back of his hand.

As if that had acted as a signal, all other sensations gradually returned to him.

His throat felt dry, and his entire body felt hot from the sun.

As he raised a hand to his forehand, his bangs, which were drenched with sweat, tangled with his fingers.

'Crap, I totally zoned out….'

Souta shook his weary head, careful not to make himself dizzy, and looked around at his surroundings.

There was no one left from the soccer club at the grounds, and the tennis courts were empty as well. Realizing that he couldn't hear the Brass Band playing from the music room anymore, he checked his wristwatch, which had also become hot under the sun.

'I was wondering why it was so quiet. Already lunchtime, huh.'

He had come to school at seven in the morning to film the additional scenes.

By the time they'd finished the meeting, fiddling around with the camera settings, and finally gone out to the schoolyard, it was around ten o'clock.

After that, they had spent all their time filming the footage that Haruki wanted.

As for Haruki himself, he had been completely engrossed in looking into the camera.

It was as if time had stopped only for the area around him, and when Souta watched him, he was so entranced that he forgot about even calling out to him.

'I've heard that if one week feels like only a second for someone, then they'll only age when all those seconds add up to a year…. When I look at Haruki, I feel like that might actually be true.'

Ever since they'd been little kids, Haruki's brightness had been the only one that hadn't changed out of the four childhood friends.

He had the power to pursue the things that appealed to him, or moved him.

‘Could I also run at full speed like that at a moment’s notice….?’

Summer vacation for third-years is the last chance to prepare before the college entrance exams.

Yuu was aiming for a national university, and was even going to bootcamp at a prep school. Although he came back next week, he had another course waiting for him afterwards, so it was practically the same as having no summer vacation at all.

Even just hearing that kind of schedule freaked Souta out a bit, but at the same time, it showed that Yuu was sure about his goals. It was probably because he sought to have that same kind of strong resolve that made him notice this.

’Though it’s not like I haven’t put any thought into it myself….’

He had a pretty good idea as to why he was so unsure.

Half-heartedness. Because the teacher recommended it. Because he wanted a guarantee.

The reason he’d wanted a designated school recommendation for a certain university was because of those vague reasons.

The people around him weren’t very intent on asking about his goals, either; he just felt the time passing by, nothing more and nothing less.

‘….Well, Akechi-sensei’s different.’

When Souta had gone to the faculty room to get the documents for the school recommendation first, the first thing that he had said was,

”You know, Mochizuki, why’re you like such an old man?”

He spoke in his usual lazy tone, but Souta could tell that he wasn’t teasing him.

He didn’t laugh much, was careless when it came to the strangest things, and was, all in all, a not-very-serious person. But he was always straight to the point when asking questions. He was a bit like Haruki in that aspect.

’Though their personalities are completely different…..’

He was the advisor for the Film Club, and since he’d also been classmates with Haruki’s brother, that made him easier to speak honestly with, although he wasn’t as attentive as the other teachers.

He was particularly close with Haruki, and Souta would sometimes see the two talking about something in the faculty room or in the hallway.

’In a way, Akechi-sensei’s actually pretty caring.’

Haruki was always complaining, “I’m the one! that’s forced to take care of *him*!” when Akechi-sensei made him do odd jobs, but as for Souta, he often gave him advice about screenplays.

He would phrase his advice in way that seemed to imply something else; like now, he seemed to be saying, “At this rate, you won’t be able to get a recommendation,” which made Souta hurriedly ask in reply,

“Is that a bad thing? No, I mean, I’m like an old man?”

“I mean, you seem like the type to only think about retirement. It’s fine to get a designated school recommendation, but have you even looked up information about courses and classes yet?”

The interview might've already started.

Although tense, Souta pursed his lips before answering to try and look serious.

"….W-well, a bit."

"Oh, really?"

Akechi-sensei muttered with disinterest, and searched the pocket of his lab coat for something. His taught classic literature, but for some reason, he wore it as part of his uniform.

The thing he'd taken out of his pocket was a lollipop.

He took off the wrapping paper with a practiced hand, and without warning, stuck it in Souta's mouth.

"Wh-wha're you….?!"

"I gave you candy, so think it over a little more. If you only choose your course based on what's going to be useful for when you're job hunting, it's going to be tough for you later on."

The moment he said this to him, Souta was struck with the feeling that he'd been seen through.

It would be a different story if Akechi-sensei would still be there to look out for him later, but in regards to Souta's life after high school, he was no more than an outsider. In the first place, it would be a real nuisance if he came back later and blamed him by saying something like, "I went to pursue my dreams as you told me and I failed. Please take responsibility for giving me that kind of advice."

As he thought about this, something dawned on him suddenly.

Akechi-sensei had told him that for that very reason.

'You have to take responsibility for your own life.'

That was why he had urged him to choose a path that wouldn't cause him regrets.

'I haven't asked Haruki about what course he's taking, but I'm sure he's already made up his mind, too.'

He'd seen Haruki in the faculty room on several occasions talking for a long time with Akechi-sensei and the other teachers.

Haruki had been laughing absently while all the teachers looked a bit worried, so he must have chosen a path that wasn't the norm, but the kind of path that only he would choose.

Even if someone was against it, even if there wasn't anyone to support him.…

If it was Haruki, he would definitely walk the path that he had chosen for himself.

Yuu had the power to persuade those around him, meaning that he probably had plenty of self-confidence.

'Then…. what about me? When I chose to get a designated school recommendation, and even when I chose to go into national literature, can I say that I didn't pay attention to how my teachers and parents felt about it?'

"Crap!"

As if to drown out the sound of the cicadas, Haruki's voice rang out.

Souta, who was taken aback by Haruki's sudden outburst, could only make wordless sounds like, "Eh? Huh?"

'What? What happened?'

While trying to calm down his pounding heart, Souta looked at Haruki, who was facing him fiercely.

"Mochita, aren't you hungry?"

"…….Oh, yeah. I mean, it *is* almost lunchtime."

"Seriously?! No wonder."

Even when he was tired, or hot, he would never say a word while he was looking out at the world through the camera, but it seemed that having an empty stomach was an exception. Souta felt laughter start to well up at how extremely typical his response had been for a high school boy.

He was just overthinking it by feeling inferior to him; Haruki wasn't some kind of superman.

"Your stomach clock sure is accurate, Haruki."

"Right? Hey, let's go eat ramen. I got a discount coupon from Yuu."

"Really? Man, Yuu's such a nice guy!"

"He probably wouldn't be too happy about being liked by us, though."

"But it'd be funny to tease him about that, right?"

"There he is, the bully, Mochita…. You look all innocent, but you can say some pretty nasty things."

"Did I always have that kind of nickname? At least make it sound a little cooler."

"Who cares!"

"Ahaha! Pushing me away because you're too hungry, huh~?"

Souta laughed so naturally, it was hard to believe that just a moment ago, he'd been stuck in a swamp of dark thoughts.

Feeling relieved at that fact, he ran nimbly towards the equipment.

The ground around the tripod holding the camera was wet, as if it had just rained.

'Ah, it's from Haruki's sweat….'

They didn't communicate with their fists like the characters in a movie.

Instead, Souta was encouraged by Haruki and Yuu's presences, and he could feel himself slowly rising up.

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

"Just the fact that we had Yuu's discount coupon made that ramen taste amazing."

On their way home from the ramen shop, Haruki and Souta felt more than stuffed.

They both loved ramen, but they couldn't beat Yuu's passion.

He was always well-informed about the opening of a new ramen shop, or searching for secret, well-known stores; of all the shops they he'd recommended them before, not a single one of them had been a miss. And of those, this one had been among the best.

"I wonder if you can only get that coupon if you're a frequent customer….?"

Souta hadn't seen any mention of it anywhere in the shop, and the employees didn't explain much about it either.

When they'd gone to pay the bill, they weren't offered any kind of point or stamp card either, so he was curious as to how Yuu had gotten the coupon.

Seeing that Souta was confused, Haruki gave a nod and explained it to him.

"Seems that way. Yuu told them that he wanted to introduce the shop to his friends, so they gave him two coupons just for that."

"That's pretty impressive, considering how stingy the manager looked."

"Well, Yuu's a real con-artist."

As Haruki shrugged his shoulders and gave a toothy grin, Souta burst out laughing as well.

"That's true. It's an amazing talent in its own way."

Being a bit shy himself, Souta was envious of that skill.

'Haruki isn't timid either, so it'd probably be easy for him to win over people like that manager….'

"Ah,"

Haruki started suddenly, as if remembering something.

Souta had a bad feeling, and thought about bringing up a topic first, but the other beat him to it.

"Have you already texted Hayasaka this week?"

Having been asked what he'd feared, Souta mumbled his reply.

"….N-not yet…."

"Oh, is that so? Didn't you say you'd be checking on her progress once a week?"

'Hold on, it was you and Yuu that just went and decided that on your own, wasn't it?'

Souta mentally stuck his tongue out at the planner that laughed at other's bad sides.

The day after the meeting, he'd been surprised that Yuu had passed along Akari's email address to him that he'd gotten from Natsuki, only to be ordered soon after to contact her.

Yuu had told him that he'd talked about this with Haruki as well, so he was sure that this was something that the two had conspired on together.

'Well, I guess it's true that it's a lot easier this way compared to talking face-to-face. Though we've only talked one time so far….'

Thanks to their meddling, or their support, to phrase it in a more positive way, Souta's relationship with Akari had

certainly taken a step forward.

If they continued to grow closer through texting like this, by the time summer vacation was over, he might be able to talk cheerfully with her. Or at the very least, his mind wouldn't go completely blank every time they had a conversation.

'….is what I thought for a while.'

In reality, his conversations with Akari were continuing peacefully.

Other than asking about her progress on the drawings, he was able to bring up meaningless topics like "What'd you eat today?" or "Where'd you go today?" now.

But in the end, it was still only through texts.

"I'll watch you do it, so hurry up and text her."

"It's fine, I'll do it later."

Although his smile was forced, Souta tried saying so with firmness.

"….Whatever you say. Well, let's hurry back and start filming again."

Souta nodded vaguely, and snuck a sideways glance at Haruki. He didn't seem suspicious of the reply he'd given just now, rather, he almost seemed in the mood to start whistling.

But Souta had seen it.

For just a second, a flicker of doubt had come across Haruki's face.

'Haruki has good intuition, after all….'

He still hadn't told the two of them, but actually, Akari's wasn't doing very well with her drawings.

Right as summer vacation began, things had been going smoothly up until she'd finished the sketch. It was just as she'd began adding color that she'd suddenly come to a stop.

At first, Souta had assumed that she'd been too busy focusing on her piece for the art contest to work on the Film Club's request. They were the ones that had interrupted them while they were busy, after all, so he'd told her not to worry without asking for the details, and kept from rushing her or anything.

However, the previous night, he had learned that the situation was more serious than he had imagined.

For once, it had been Akari that had texted him first, and Souta had been elated before even reading the contents.

But as soon as he opened it up, he immediately snapped out of that dreamy state of mind.

"What is love, anyway?"

The text had consisted of only one line: that single, mysterious question.

Souta didn't know the details of Akari's situation, but in the back of his mind, Haruki's face had drifted up. Whenever his childhood friend got stuck while making something, he would say things similar to that.

"What do you think it means to love someone? How is it different from being in love with someone?"

”Hey, did you know? When you’re in love, the brain gives off different hormones like dopamine and adrenaline. Then, logically, wouldn’t that mean that ‘love’ is just a chemical reaction?”

”In the first place, does the brain even fall in love? Or is it somewhere with the heart?”

Was he asking them those questions, or himself?

At first, both Souta and Yuu had a tough time deciding, and were only able to make vague noises of consent. But by the end of their second year, they learned to keep quiet and just watch over him.

’That’s probably just him thinking out loud.’

Was Akari also not expecting Souta to give her an “answer”?

Of course, since she’d texted him, she probably wanted some kind of reply.

But in reality, it really had been like talking to herself in the mirror, and not a question directed at him. It just so happened that Souta had been the one she’d sent it to.

’It was written in the manga that I borrowed from Natsuki, too….’

Those that are called geniuses worry about things on their own and find answers on their own.

No matter how much ordinary people try to help, they’ll only get in the way.

’Then Haruki might be the only one that can give Akarin any advice….’

Since the two shared similar views, that was also a possibility.

It would probably give much better results than if Souta tried meddling, anyway.

’I know that. I know, but I still want to do something.’

After thinking it over for a night, he decided to recommend the title of a romance movie, along with a short summary.

He didn’t know what it was about love that Akari wanted to know, but he thought it might help her somehow.

‘Good luck, Akarin….!’

Souta looked up at the cloudy sky, and shouted this in his mind.

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

By the time they’d finished shooting the additional scenes and began compiling them together, summer vacation had come to an end.

To Souta, it had felt like a blink of an eye.

With how terrible the lingering summer heat had been this year, that probably made it feel like it had gone by even quicker. Although it was still fairly hot, as soon as September came along, the thoughts of upcoming tests and interviews made summer seem far off.

’It’s hard to believe that we’ll be graduating in a little more than half a year, too.’

He was sure that now would be the only time they’d have free time to work on the movie.

His plans after high school were different from Haruki and the others, and they might even end up living far away

from each other. If that happened, it would be hard to meet up as easily as they did now.

'We've been fooling around together for all these years, and now we're suddenly going our separate ways….'

As Souta let out a sigh, Yuu, who was sitting beside him, shook his shoulder slightly.

"Mochita, we're on the next scene now."

"….Huh? Oh, sorry."

In the room where the three had gathered together for the first time in a while, Souta hurriedly flipped through the pages of the script covered in sticky notes.

'Ah, shoot. I went back to the last scene.'

Since he was lacking sleep, his body wasn't moving the way he wanted it to.

Glancing up at Haruki, who was sitting in front of him, he saw him flipping through the pages of the script at weird timings.

They'd received the text about discussing the editing last night, or rather, just this morning, so Haruki had most likely gotten even less sleep than he had. Upon closer inspection, there were dark circles underneath his eyes.

A movie isn't completed as soon as the filming is done; the editing that comes afterwards has a huge effect on the final product.

Even when it came to editing, it was the producer, Haruki, that took command, but Souta, who was in charge of the script, and Yuu, who was something like the producer, would also pitch in with feedback during the process.

Since Yuu had been away due to his prep school's boot camp, he was more distant from the film, but in a good way. Being closer to the position of the viewers, he was able to give opinions from various points of view. Essentially, Yuu was probably the only one that could grasp the big picture of the movie production's progress.

"So basically, we've filmed all the scenes that we're able to at the moment. I'll help check them over for now."

"….Yeah, thanks,"

Haruki answered in a slightly hoarse voice, and beside him, Souta nodded limply.

Yuu opened up the note-taking memo, and as if remembering something, muttered, "Oh, right."

'Yeah, yeah, and now he's going to ask me a question.'

Haruki also tended to start off the same way whenever he was about to bring up a difficult topic.

It was probably because of the fact that they were childhood friends that they similar in these trivial aspects, or picked up on each other's habits.

"Mochita, how are Hayasaka's drawings coming along?"

"….Um, well, about that…."

"Don't tell me you've lost contact with her?"

"Have you even been texting her like you're supposed to?"

Yuu and Haruki came onto him with rapid-fire questions.

Carried on by that momentum, Souta interrupted them to defend himself.

“What?! Come on, of course I have!”

Souta furrowed his brow in exasperation, but Yuu and Haruki continued to crack jokes at him regardless.

“Even so, weren’t you about to pass out during the meeting last time?”

“If I hadn’t acted quickly enough and taken over when I did, he would’ve fainted right then and there.”

“Th-Thanks a lot for saving me that time…! But really, I’ve been doing fine on my own now. I even go to see see how much she’s done once a week.”

Souta pounded his chest in triumph, but inside, he was worried that his voice had been unsteady.

His gaze kept wavering as well, causing Yuu to see through him right away.

“If it’s going so well, what are you making that face for?”

“That’s because, um, well….”

As Souta started fidgeting again, Haruki suddenly snapped his fingers.

“I know. It’s because Hayasaka’s the problem, right?”

’*Ugh, so he figured it out, after all….’*

There was no point in trying to hide it anymore. Souta reluctantly began to explain the situation.

“She finished the sketch, and has already started coloring it, but…. She said that there was still ‘something’ missing, and hasn’t made any progress since then to finish it.”

As if this was all very familiar to him, Yuu held his head while muttering, “Yeah, that’s not good.”

“That always seems to happen when you’re making something, huh.”

“And what’re more, suggestions from other people don’t help at all. It’s something you just have to figure out for yourself….”

He knew right away that Yuu was indirectly talking about Haruki.

However, whether the person in question realized this or not, he made a sour face and simply added, “The pains of creativity.”

“I tried asking her what she was stuck on, but even she didn’t seem to know how to respond. She started getting all philosophically, and saying things like, ‘What is love, anyway?’”

“Ughhh, this seriously isn’t good….”

As Yuu furrowed his brow and Souta was about to voice his agreement, Haruki asked in genuine confusion,

“Why’s that?”

Yuu seemed to find the question unexpected, and stared blankly at Haruki.

Souta was also too surprised to do anything but stare with wide eyes.

Even with two people staring him down, Haruki didn't seem particularly fazed, and spoke absently,

"Look, it's not like Hayasaka was saying 'What is love?' in a really philosophical way, like 'What is the meaning of life?' or anything. She just doesn't really get it, that's all."

"….I-I still don't understand. Can you say that one more time?"

"Mochita, you're just thinking too hard. Listen, it basically means that Hayasaka's never had any experience with dating anyone. That's it."

Souta swallowed loudly.

If Haruki's explanation was right, it would mean that he didn't have any kind of ultimate rival.

There were a lot of guys that liked Akari, but in a way, those guys and Souta were on equal standing. However, if Akari had someone that she liked, it would become a disadvantageous battle.

None of them would have any hope, making the chance of winning go up slightly.

'Wait, but she really hasn't even gotten a crush anyone since becoming a high schooler….? Nn? Nnn?!'

"Come to think of it, Akarin was my first love…."

Souta blurted out before he could stop himself.

'But what if, what if….'

He could feel his face heating up from the possibility that had just dawned on him.

"Mochita, quit blushing when you're the one saying that.… You'll make me feel embarrassed too."

As Yuu fanned his face with his hand, Haruki teased him,

"Like you're one to talk when you can't even face your first love."

"Speaking of which.… Haruki, how are things between you and Aida?"

"Same as usual? Or, well actually, she said she can't walk home with me for a while."

Due to how casually he'd said it, both Yuu and Souta were late in reacting.

She can't walk home with me for a while——

Repeating the words a couple times in his head, he went pale when the meaning finally clicked.

"….What? Wait, hold on a minute, doesn't that mean she's trying to distance herself from you?"

"Yeah, something's definitely wrong here!"

"Wow, you guys sure have some fiery reactions!"

He wasn't sure if Haruki really meant that or was just trying to hide his embarrassment, but the way he said it made it seem like it didn't particularly concern him.

Souta, on the other hand, found himself unable to keep calm, and asked one question after another.

“You’re the one that’s too cold, Haruki! Are you really fine with that? Did you ask her why?”

“Hm? Well.… She said something about being busy with the art contest.”

“So it’s not because of you or anything, then. That’s good.”

“Geez, don’t worry us like that.…”

Yuu also breathed a sigh of relief, but after a moment, tilted his head curiously.

“Hmmm….”

Haruki muttered in a bored fashion, and then threw a sharp stare in Yuu’s direction.

“And what would be the point in asking? If I told you that I was going out with Aida…. No, that’s not right. If I said that I liked anyone other than Natsuki, would you feel relieved? And then what?”

At first, he had simply thought that a hard ball had been thrown again.

He thought that Haruki was angry at them for asking out Aida out of half-curiosity.

However, the questions that Haruki asked took an unthinkable turn.

’If Haruki liked anyone other than Natsuki, Yuu would feel relieved….?’

Perhaps Yuu had intended to provoke Haruki, but instead, it had come right back at him like a boomerang.

Yuu was at a loss for words, and could only stare blankly back at Haruki.

’Would it be okay for me to butt in here?’

From how he interpreted the atmosphere between the two, it felt like no matter what was said, it would just be adding fuel to the flame.

But unable to stand leaving things be, either, Souta took a deep breath.

“Hey, Yuu.”

Once Souta called out to him lightly, Yuu’s shoulders shook as if snapping out of a daze.

“I don’t really get what’s going on, but aren’t you hungry?”

“Huh….?”

Already gathering his things together, it was Haruki who agreed instead of Yuu, who still seemed too bewildered.

“It feels like a hole could open up in my stomach from how empty it is. I haven’t eaten anything since last night.”

’Good. Haruki realized it was time to back off, too.’

It was easy to make Haruki laugh as well as angry, but he never kept it up for long.

Unlike Yuu, who was still reacting stiffly, Haruki had already completely shifted gears.

Haruki stared at Yuu again, but his gaze wasn’t sharp like before, and he was smiling, too.

“Let’s go get ramen!”

"….Let's go to that newly-opened place. It's behind the supermarket."

Yuu finally rose from his seat as well, sharing info on his new favorite place.

"Huh? You already found a new one? You sure do love ramen a lot, Yuu."

Souta replied, trying to ask like normal again, but there was still something that didn't quite sit right with him.

"And what would be the point in asking? If I told you that I was going out with Aida…. No, that's not right. If I said that I liked anyone other than Natsuki, would you feel relieved? And then what?"

He knew that that hadn't been Haruki's usual retaliation, but a question meant to provoke Yuu.

If Haruki really did like Natsuki, it would have been in his nature to clearly acknowledge that.

'Then, assuming that he doesn't like her…. Why did he bring up her name? And same goes for Yuu. He seemed like he wanted to bring the topic back to Haruki and Aida, but…. H-huh?!'

Why hadn't Yuu said anything when Haruki had avoided the topic?

No, maybe it was because he *couldn't* say anything.

'….Dammit, the curiosity is killing me.'

Souta shook his head, chasing out the thoughts running through his head.

Perhaps there really was some invisible trench opening up between the two of them, but the most Souta could do was quietly stay close to them.

'I don't really want to think about it, but…. If they really do end up getting into a fight, that's when I'll get between them.'

Declaring this firmly to himself, Souta ran out into the hallway where Yuu and Haruki were waiting.

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

Surrounding the brand-new table, they all slurped their own ramen.

It was evident that this shop was a hit, as everyone was digging in.

Even Souta was swallowing his wonton ramen with ease, forgetting all about his stomach feeling heavy since that morning. He'd ordered it after hearing it was the one that had the lightest soup, but it was so much more delicious than he'd imagined.

'Yuu's shouyu ramen smells good too.'

Sitting across from Souta was Haruki with his shio and green onions, and next to him, Yuu had ordered the classic shouyu ramen.

It had all started roughly thirty minutes ago.

Souta has recognized Koyuki from afar in front of the train station and run up to him.

"Yukki! Wait no, I mean, Ayase-kun! Are you free right now? Wanna come eat ramen with us?"

"Ahaha, you can call me Yukki if you'd like. Ramen? Sure, I'd love to."

Even though they weren't even close enough to use nicknames or walk home together, Koyuki has answered Souta with a smile.

Just as he was feeling overjoyed that Koyuki had accepted his sudden invitation, he caught sight of Yuu standing off to the side with a complicated smile on his face.

Souta did a double-take at Yuu's behavior, which was so different from his usual, friendly demeanor.

While it was true that Koyuki held the position of being a guy close with Natsuki, that was it. It seemed to him that Koyuki clearly had romantic feelings for her, but it didn't look like anything special had happened between them.

'On the contrary, ever since summer vacation ended, things seem kind of…. awkward?'

Natsuki and Koyuki often traded manga with each other, but even then, things felt stiff between them.

Even Yuu, who watched the two from afar, had been keeping a slight distance from Natsuki.

'He won't say he's going to leave now just because Yukki's joining us, right….?'

Becoming worried, Souta turned around and heard a sharp, clear sound.

Haruki had patted Yuu smartly on the back, who had fallen silent with a sour look on his face.

"Well isn't this a great opportunity? To have a nice man-to-man talk, that is."

Since he was saying it like that, it looked like something really *had* happened between Yuu and Koyuki.

Although he seemed reluctant, Yuu nodded in reply to Haruki's words.

'Well, they're separate matters, I guess.'

The reason that Souta hadn't been told was probably Yuu didn't want him to know.

It was probably best not to pry or bug him about it.

Regardless of the the fact that they were in the same club, were close friends, or even childhood friends, that didn't mean that they had to tell each other about every little thing.

'Though I can't helping feeling, just a little bit, that Haruki knows something I don't….'

After seeing that they'd mostly finished eating, Souta started bombarding Koyuki with questions.

The topic was, of course, Koyuki's recent transformation.

"Wow! So you got your hair done at a salon in Aoyama that you read about in a magazine?"

"I thought I'd start changing how I looked, first."

"That's true. It really depends on which hairdresser you go to. You look really good with that style."

"I'm still the same on the inside, though, so change can only go so far…."

As Koyuki laughed weakly in embarrassment, Souta shook his fists and tried to encourage him.

"Yukki, you should have more self-confidence. It's amazing that you can just transform yourself like this, you know!"

"….R-right…."

'Ah, did I overdo it? I wonder if he thinks I'm weird now for blurting that out all of a sudden.'

Koyuki looked taken aback by Souta's outburst, but he seemed to realize that his admiration was genuine.

Like snow thawing, a smile slowly made its way onto his face.

'Yukki really has changed…..'

It's difficult to accept a compliment directly. You wind up feeling embarrassed and try to dismiss it, or you can't help suspecting some underlying meaning behind it. Either way, it's probably due to lack of self-confidence.

'When people tell him he's talented, Haruki never denies it.'

"Whatever the reason is, it's amazing he could completely transform himself like that."

Right before summer vacation, Souta had seen Koyuki outside from the window and said while squinting, as if the sight of him was blinding, and Yuu had told him, *"You're fine the way you are, Mochita."*

He'd been happy to hear that, but he knew he couldn't let himself be spoiled by his friend's kind words.

"Want to change, huh…."

'Right, right, I was just thinking the same….. Hm?'

Yuu hadn't been talking to him, but to himself.

Everyone's eyes focused on Yuu after he'd suddenly muttered those words.

Yuu noticed that everyone was staring at him, and asked in confusion,

"….Wh-What is it? What's wrong?"

"Well, I mean, you just said, 'I want to change,' didn't you?"

He looked around for agreement and Haruki also nodded.

"Yeah, you did."

Yuu looked visually shocked at their reactions.

'Crap, maybe we should have pretended we didn't hear him…..'

As he searched for the words to smooth it over, Koyuki suddenly spoke up.

"So even you can feel that way, Setoguchi-kun?"

Koyuki sounded surprised, like what Yuu had said was something unusual.

"….Is there a problem with that?"

"Ah, I didn't mean it in a bad way…. From how I see it, you're very lucky to have what you do now."

It was probably intentional that Koyuki hadn't specified what exactly Yuu "had".

But when Yuu didn't ask for clarification on it, Souta felt like butting in.

'No, it's not the time for that! It's not like Yuu's going to pick a fight now, is he….?'

He was usually gentle like an older brother, but once Natsuki came into the picture, it was an entirely different story.

Souta could tell that with Natsuki caught in the middle, things had gotten complicated between the two.

Considering the situation, would Yuu be able to answer in his usual manner after hearing Koyuki's vague reply?

As Souta panicked over how things would turn out, Yuu suddenly forced a laugh.

"Thanks. I'll share some chashu with you for that."

'Phew! Nice save, Yuu!'

Rather than speaking those thoughts out loud, Souta decided to go along with the change in topic.

"Ah, no fair! I want some too!"

"Don't worry, it's not hard to win Yuu over with flattery."

Haruki added, and the table soon became lively again.

"Come on, man…. quit saying things that make me look bad."

"All things aside, I don't it'd hurt anyone if you were a bit nicer to us, Yuu."

"Because his name's written with the character for 'kindness'?"

As Souta fooled around along with Haruki, out of the corner of his eye, he caught sight of Koyuki sitting there with a smile.

He almost seemed a bit blinded, like he was looking up at a bright, clear sky.

Yuu seemed to have noticed as well, and when he looked over, Koyuki whispered something to him.

Souta felt bad for eavesdropping, but still, he listened in on their conversation.

"You really are lucky to have them, Setoguchi-kun."

"Most of the time, they're just really annoying."

"….Even so, I envy you."

'Ah, so that's what he meant….'

It was a short exchange, but he figured about what it was that Koyuki felt Yuu "had".

He was saying that Yuu "had" friends.

And at the same time, implying that it was different in his case.

'That's not true. Don't you have them too, Yukki?'

Souta felt like retorting, but stopped himself at the last minute.

He realized that he knew nothing about Koyuki, much less what kind of friends he had.

Koyuki had changed drastically like a butterfly emerging from a chrysalis, and Souta had merely been watching him from afar in one-sided admiration. Although he felt a closeness to him, he'd never conveyed that to him.

'….When it comes to Yukki, it's like I'm just part of an audience watching a movie.'

Because he was able to do things that he couldn't, and because he didn't want to compare himself to him, Souta must of unconsciously thought of Koyuki as some person on the other side of a screen.

'That's probably the same with Akarin.'

He'd only come to know about her through hearing her conversations with Natsuki and Miou.

He was always watching her, so it only felt like they were close.

Everything was just one-sided for him.

As his heart began to hurt unexpectedly, Souta silently said to Koyuki,

'Yukki, I wish I could become friends with you.'

It wasn't just because he was the one that had given him the courage to talk to Akari, or because he felt a smug sense of camaraderie with him; he just wanted to talk with him like a normal person.

But that day, Souta never got the chance to tell Koyuki his feelings.

As soon as they left the ramen shop, Koyuki called out solely to Yuu.

"Setoguchi-kun, could I have a bit more of your time?"

He added that he wanted it to be just the two of them, if possible, so Souta and Haruki had no other choice but to leave the scene.

He had no idea what Yuu talked about with Koyuki once they left.

But judging from the way they acted the following day, he could tell that something must have happened.

It would seem that in just one day, the trench that had opened up between Yuu and Koyuki had deepened even further.

Perhaps it meant that the love triangle revolving around Natsuki was reaching its crucial stage.

A Solution for Jealousy (Chapter 4)

renna-translations.tumblr.com/post/127257428868/a-solution-for-jealousy-chapter-4

Thanks for waiting! Here's the fourth chapter of the novel adaption of HoneyWorks' "**Yakimochi no Kotae (A Solution for Jealousy)**"!

Masterpost with links to all the translated chapters can be found here.
You can find the masterpost with all the Confession Executive Committee/Sound of Confession series-related translations here.

←Chapter 3 | Chapter 5→

* If you can, I highly encourage supporting the creators by buying the book for yourself at Amazon!

—

Ayase Koyuki

Birthday: August 28th
Horoscope Sign: Virgo
Blood Type: A

Souta's classmate.
In the Gardening Club. Natsuki's manga
friend. After changing his appearance recently,
he's gathered attention from the girls.

—

solution 4

'I wonder what's up with Nacchan and Miou-chan….'

Having come back from changing classrooms, Akari let out a discreet sigh.

Although the end of summer vacation might be part of the reason, Akari had noticed off about the two of them.

She'd tried asking if they were worried about something, or were feeling unwell, but each time, they would shake their heads.

But, the fact that they weren't walking beside Akari at the moment was definite proof that something had happened.

'They said they were stopping by the faculty room, but I wonder if it's actually because they wanted to avoid Setoguchi-kun and Serizawa-kun after seeing them walking towards us in the hallway.'

She didn't want to suspect anything, but Natsuki and Miou had been acting strange for a while now.

And it seemed like Yuu and Haruki were avoiding them, as well.

As soon as the lunch break started, the two of them would disappear into the Film Club room.

At first, Akari had thought that they were just busy with their club activities.

That was a possibility, but when she saw Natsuki talking with Souta as usual, that's when she realized it.

Natsuki was trying to keep away from Yuu, and Miou was doing the same with Haruki.

'I wonder what could have happened. Isn't there anything I can do for them?'

Having unintentionally clenched her fist, she heard a crumpling sound.

Returning to her senses, Akari was just about to straighten out the printout when she heard someone call out to her from behind.

"Hayasaka-san."

The voice was familiar.

She had never heard him say her name up until now, but there was no mistaking it.

The owner of that kind, comforting voice was probably *him*.

“….Mochizuki-kun?”

When she turned around, she saw just who she had expected to see.

She wondered if he had a fever, seeing how he was slightly red in the face, all the way up to his ears.

She was just about to ask him what was wrong, but Souta spoke up before she could.

“Uh, umm….”

He seemed to be having trouble getting the words out, and had to pause again.

Somehow, even Akari was starting to feel nervous, and she clutched her textbook lightly.

“I have something to talk to you about. At 4:10 after school today, could you wait for me in this classroom?”

’It’s the second time we’ve talked.’

They had exchanged texts numerous times already, but talking face-to-face like this still made her nervous.

It took a lot of effort just for Akari to nod silently.

“G-good…. I’ll see you later, then.”

Having said what he wanted to say, Souta took off in a run.

Akari was left behind before she was even able to fully take in the situation, and simply stood there in a daze for a while.

’He’s going out of his way to meet me in person to talk about the picture for the Film Club, right….?’

Once she’d calmed down, the first thing that came to mind was the picture that the Film Club had asked her to draw.

Ever since she’d gotten stuck during summer vacation, Akari still hadn’t been able to finish it. The reason for this was that she couldn’t grasp the meaning of the theme: love.

’Hopefully I’ll come up with some kind of hint by the time school’s over….’

She heard another crumpling sound at her hand again and quickly loosened her grip.

If her shoulder were too tense, she wouldn’t be able to draw the way she wanted to.

Telling herself this, Akari reached out for the door of the classroom in front of her.

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

After SHR ended, the classroom became noisy all at once.

Akari finished gathering up her things, reached for her bag, and looked up at the clock on the wall.

There was about an hour left before the arranged time.

'Even if I head for the art room now, it'll be time to go by the time I really get into it….'

"Akari-chan, let's go to Art Club!"

"Eri-chan-sensei's going to be here today too!"

Miou and Natsuki, who were already shouldering their bags, came over to her seat.

Akari nodded to them, but then shook her head.

"….There's a book I want to finish reading, so why don't you two go on ahead"

"Really?"

She knew that Natsuki didn't sense any underlying meaning behind her words, but she still felt uneasy somehow. There really wasn't any need to show them as proof, but Akari pulled out the paperback book from her bag.

"The due date is tomorrow."

"Looks like you'd better hurry then."

As Miou nodded with a serious expression on her face, Akari laughed weakly back.

'It's not a lie, but I still feel kind of bad….'

For some reason, she couldn't bring herself to tell them about her meeting with Souta.

It wasn't because they would be talking about the picture for the Film Club that she, alone, had been chosen to draw.

But no matter how much Akari tried to think of why else she couldn't tell them, she wasn't able to find the answer.

After seeing off the other two to the art room, Akari started reading, just like she'd said she would.

The rest of her classmates left the classroom one after another, and by the time she'd reached the last chapter, she was alone.

'It feels like a waste, so I guess I'll finish reading the rest at home.'

She shut the book, and noticed orange light coming in through the window.

The curtains had been left open, dying the classroom in soft, warm colors.

"….Ah, it's already four."

Standing up from her seat, Akari stretched out her stiff body.

Since she'd been so focused on her book, her mind was a lot clearer now.

'It was a good idea to stay in the classroom.'

Even if she had picked up a paintbrush, she probably wouldn't have been able to concentrate, or even face the canvas in the first place.

On the contrary, right now, she would rather experience someone else's work in order to find the inspiration to create something of her own.

Ding dong dang dong….

Hearing the chime, Akari looked up at the clock on the wall in alarm.

It was 4:05, five more minutes until the arranged time.

The moment she became conscious of this fact, her heart started pounding against her chest.

Akari pressed a hand lightly against her chest through her blazer to try and calm down.

“Eh?”

She heard the door open with a rattle, and there was Souta, standing there wide-eyed.

He seemed surprised to see Akari already waiting in the classroom despite having arrived early.

Should I say something first? She wondered.

Just as Akari was about to speak, Souta’s voice rang out.

“Am I not good enough?!”

Not good enough? For what?

Though she found his words strange, Akari answered reflectively.

“N-no, I think you’re fine….?”

Souta widened his eyes, as if in disbelief at what Akari had said.

In addition, he didn’t seem able to form proper words, either.

“H-huh?”

“Huh?”

Without knowing why Souta was so flustered, Akari could only tilt her head in confusion.

For some reason, Souta frowned a little at her reaction.

’I wonder what’s gotten into him. Is there something he’s having trouble saying….?’

As she looked over at him with a mixture of concern and confusion, Souta took a deep breath and said in almost a shout,

“I mean I like you!”

“Huh?!”

“Like I said, I like you!”

This time, it was Akari’s turn to fall silent.

’Like…. like *like? Mochizuki-kun…. likes me?’*

Because Akari had never even dreamed of being confessed to, she was shocked to the point of being breathless.

Souta clenched his fists tightly and looked down with his flushed face.

“I’d never make you feel sad, and I’ll make sure you’re smiling every day!”

Akari’s heart pounded even faster at the “promise” he made in a serious voice.

“And I’d love it if you made me a bento every day!”

“Wha….”

Her heart, which had been beating so fast she thought it might burst, suddenly dropped its pace.

’A bento…. every day?’

Souta had raised his face and was looking at Akari in expectation. After staring back at him for a couple seconds, she realized that nothing was going to happen until she replied.

Hesitantly, Akari told him her true feelings.

“It’s too much work to make one every single day, so no thank you.”

“*Seriously?!*”

Souta seemed rather shocked to hear this.

He looked as dejected as a puppy that had just been scolded.

’Isn’t there anything else I could give him besides a bento….?’

As she racked her brain, she suddenly came up with an idea.

Akari perked up and said in a tone she’s use when inviting Natsuki or Miou somewhere,

“Oh, come to think of it, a new cake shop’s opened across from the station! If you’d like, shall we go there together?”

Souta was frozen on the spot, doing nothing but blinking repeatedly.

’Maybe he doesn’t like sweets?’

Just as she was about to try and come up with a better idea, Souta’s eyes lit up.

“Yes! I’d love to!”

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

As the transition from summer to winter uniforms ended, the school filled with vivid colors.

Underneath their blazers, the girls could be seen wearing colored cardigans ranging from black, navy, beige, and gray, and the boys also sported colorful sweaters and hoodies.

‘I really like the color of Serizawa-kun’s sweater.’

Watching Haruki head for the Film Club room, Akari let out a sigh.

’The pink color goes really well with his blonde hair.’

While she had only seem them during school field trips, Haruki’s street clothes were fashionable, too.

Maybe it was the fact that he made movies that gave him a good sense for color.

“Aka…. Hayasaka-san?”

“Wah?!”

Akari flinched, surprised at being spoken to in the midst of spacing out.

Souta, who had been the one to call out to her, slumped his shoulders at her reaction, looking apologetic.

“Sorry, I didn’t mean to startle you….”

“N-no, it’s okay! Um, umm….”

She thought she’d better come up with something to talk about before he asked her what she was looking at, but she couldn’t think of anything. Although she tried to think fast, the only words she could come up with were “Well….” or “You see….”

However, Souta waited patiently for Akari without rushing her.

“It’s alright. Take your time.”

She felt relaxed seeing Souta’s genuine smile.

But at the same time, she started to feel a bit uneasy somehow.

’So Mochizuki-kun can make that kind of face….’

Come to think of it, this might be the first time that Souta had smiled at her so kindly.

He was relaxed when talking with Haruki, Yuu, and Natsuki, but he usually looked somewhat nervous in front of Akari. He was awkward during conversations, too, and they would end after just a couple replies.

’I end up getting nervous too, so I guess that makes two of us.’

Akari thought, but then she realized something.

She was shy, but she liked to talk, so once she got to know someone, she could talk more easily and even start conversations on her own.

So she wondered why she still felt nervous around Souta.

“Um, are you feeling unwell?”

“….Huh?”

Hearing a voice from beside her, Akari flinched in surprise again.

She worried about having shown an unpleasant reaction, but Souta only muttered, “I knew it.”

“You’re spacing out because you have a fever, right?”

Akari abruptly raised her voice at Souta pointing this out.

“Th-the movie! You’ll show it to me, right?”

“Huh? Oh, right. It hasn’t been edited yet, but I think it’ll help. But if you have a cold, should we do this another day?”

“It’s alright! I’m fine, really.”

Akari confidently brandished two fists, and though he looked reluctant, Souta nodded.

’Mochizuki-kun is so kind.’

Having realized just now that such a kind person had told her they liked her, Akari became even more nervous.

But if she continued acting reserved like this, she wouldn’t be able to give him an answer.

Her reply to his confession was still up in the air, and right now, she was in the middle of something like a grace period. She had to make good use of this time to ensure she gave an answer that was sincere and honest to both of them.

’I never thought love was so complicated….’

Even though they were her own feelings, they felt just a little out of reach.

While struggling with her frustration, Akari walked down the stairs to the art room.

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

There were other people in the art room, so Akari borrowed the preparation room next door.

They placed the laptop that Souta had brought on top of the long desk, and together, they watched the in-production movie.

The movie told the fleeting love story of a high school girl.

The one that the girl had fallen in love with was a senpai who was two years older and a member of the same Art Club.

She does her best to paint pictures to get this senpai, who’s the president of the Art Club, to notice her, but she can’t draw the way she wants to at all.

Her slump drags on; although she used to always win awards during middle school, her works keep being rejected.

What’s happening? What am I doing wrong?

She thinks frantically, and gradually grows distant from the canvas.

And then, it’s March; her senpai’s graduation is just around the corner.

If she doesn’t tell him her feelings now, they might not be able to meet ever again.

Not wanting that to happen, the heroine picks up her brush again.

She pours out her overflowing feelings into the canvas, and and on the day before the graduation ceremony, she finishes a single painting——

“Huh? Is that it?”

The screen dimmed, and Akari looked over at Souta sitting beside her.

“The ending’s already been decided in the script, but Haruki didn’t want to film it yet until he saw picture first.”

“….I see, that makes sense. I’m sorry for holding everything up.”

“N-no, not at all! I wasn’t trying to rush you or anything, so, um….!”

With his face bright red, Souta frantically waved his hands.

Touched by his kindness, Akari felt even more apologetic.

“If you don’t have enough art supplies or anything, please let me know!”

Souta brought up, probably because he’d been worried about how Akari had gotten so quiet.

However, the topic was so sudden, it took a while for her to process it.

“….Um, I use the ones from the Art Club, so I’m fine.”

“Th-then, in that case, if the ones from the Art Club run out, I can go and help you buy more.”

“Alright then. Thank you very much.”

’Mochizuki-kun really is kind….’

Ever since the day that Souta had told her he liked her after school, they had started talking more.

They went to the cake shop together, and he would recommend ramen shops to her. Little by little, she felt them growing closer together, but they were both still keeping their distance from each other.

Since then, Souta had never said anything like “I like you” or “Go out with me” again.

She was even starting to think that it might not have been a confession at all.

’I want to ask, but it’d be weird to bring it up again….’

She glanced over at Souta, and as if he had felt her gaze, he turned to look back at her.

Their eyes met for a split second, and in that same moment, Souta fell out of his chair.

“M-Mochizuki-kun?! Are you okay?”

“S-sorry….!”

Souta quickly stood up and bowed deeply.

She didn’t know why he was apologizing, but thankfully, it didn’t look like he was hurt anywhere.

Her relief lasted only a moment, before Souta said something shocking again, “You won’t be able to focus with me here the entire time, right?”

“…..Huh?”

She wondered how he could have come to that conclusion.

While Akari had no idea what was going on, Souta seemed to have come up with his own understanding of this situation. His face and ears were red, seemingly from being agitated, and his swimming eyes showed no chance of looking straight at Akari.

'I don't really get it, but I have to clear up this misunderstanding….'

As Akari started to get up from her chair as well, Souta gave a small shout and dashed for the door.

And then he took off in a run with signs of stopping.

"P-please excuse meeee—!"

Souta's screaming voice echoed from down the hall, and Akari was left blinking in surprise.

"….Did I do something wrong?"

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

After replaying the movie several times, Akari felt like drawing very much.

But realizing that she'd forgotten her sketchpad in the classroom, she ran to go and get it.

'I want to put down these feelings on paper as soon as I can….!'

"Kyah?!"

In all her rush, she stumbled even though there was nothing to trip over.

Placing her hand on the wall to catch herself, her eyes met with Souta, who was coming down the stairs.

"M-Mochizuki-kun…."

'He saw that, how embarrassing.'

She turned her head down right away, but for some reason, Souta spoke up frantically.

"N-no, it's not what you think! I wasn't following you or anything, I was just looking for Haruki….!"

As he spoke words that were different than what she had expected, Akari raised her face to look up at Souta again.

Souta's face was bright red, and he was waving both hands in front of him.

'He said he was looking for Serizawa-kun, right….?'

Remembering what Natsuki had told her once, Akari tried confirming it.

"Serizawa-kun disappeared again?"

"Y-yeah! Wait, 'again'? Is Haruki that well-known for his wanderlust?"

"I don't know if it's well-known or not, but I heard about it from Nacchan. She told me that he way he goes walking around the school whenever he gets stuck while working on something is just like me."

Although she laughed as she explained why she remembered this fact so well, Souta was now making an indescribable face.

"Mochizuki-kun….?"

Had she said accidentally something wrong again?

As she hesitantly called his name, Souta laughed and started speaking.

“You and Haruki really are similar in a lot of ways, Hayasaka-san. If you ever get the chance, it might be a good idea to have a nice, long chat with him. With both of you being geniuses, I think you two could really connect.”

Akari wasn’t sure how to respond, and simply nodded vaguely.

’I’d be happy to be able to have a creative conversation with Serizawa-kun, but….’

She understood what he wanted to say, but it was a bit off-putting to be called a genius.

And more importantly, she was bothered by the glimpse of loneliness that she saw in Souta’s smile.

The silence continued, and before they knew it, they were in front of the classroom.

’Mochizuki-kun said he’d go to look somewhere else is Serizawa-kun isn’t here, right?’

Should she help him look?

She was about to call out to Souta, who walking a step ahead of her, but he had suddenly stopped.

“You might be misunderstanding something, but that girl’s not the one I like…”

There was no mistaking that voice.

That clear and imposing voice belonged to Haruki.

’I wonder who he’s talking to….?’

Overcome by curiosity, Akari peeked into the classroom.

’….Nacchan?!’

Akari unconsciously rubbed her eyes, but even after doing so, it was definitely Natsuki in there.

Right now, Haruki wasn’t standing in front of Miou like she had expected, but Natsuki.

After taking a deep breath, Haruki continued.

“I like *you*!”

At that moment, Akari’s legs gave out beneath her, and her shoulder banged against the door.

Her impact with the door made a loud thunk sound, and Natsuki and Haruki turned around in alarm.

“This way,”

Souta whispered in her ear.

Akari nodded, but she couldn’t even move an inch from where she was standing.

“….I’ll be taking your hand for just a minute.”

Souta seemed to have realized Akari’s dilemma, and gently took her hand, pulling her along.

They moved away from the door, backing up against the windowsill on the opposite side of the hallway.

Having apparently entered a blind spot for the view from inside the classroom, neither Haruki nor Natsuki seemed to have noticed them.

“….Guess it was just the wind.”

“Probably.”

Akari listened to them both laugh, her head feeling fuzzy.

“Let’s move away from here, slowly.”

Akari nodded silently, and followed after Souta as he pulled her along.

Souta’s hand was bonier than it looked, wrapping comfortably around Akari’s.

’He really does have a boy’s hand….’

After going down one floor, Souta’s slowly stopped walking.

“We’re probably safe now if we’ve made it this far.”

Instead of replying, Akari merely stared intently at Souta’s hand.

Seeing what she staring at, Souta gave a small shout, quickly released her hand.

“Um, I didn’t…. err…. Hayasaka-san?”

With her head down, Akari couldn’t see Souta’s expression.

But she could hear his voice filled with worry as he called her name.

’….If I stay quiet forever, I’ll just cause trouble for him….’

After taking a deep breath, Akari raised her head and tried smiling at Souta.

“That was surprising, seeing Serizawa-kun tell Nacchan that he….”

She tried to finish her sentence, but her voice gave out in the end.

If Natsuki was the one that Haruki liked, then what would happen to Miou?

“So I really did misunderstand things….”

“Huh?”

Souta looked in her direction, his face seeming to show that he was fighting something back.

But when his eyes met with Akari’s, he forced a smile.

’I wonder what Mochizuki-kun misunderstood?’

If it was about Natsuki being the one that Haruki had confessed to, then just like Akari, that would mean he had misunderstood who Haruki liked. But even then, why did he look so hurt by that?

“Um, what exactly did you misunderstand…?”

She tried asking, but Souta only smiled bitterly without giving her an answer.

If he didn’t want to say it, she wouldn’t force him to. But despite that, she still felt curious.

’I shouldn’t be too persistent about it, but….’

While she pondered over how to ask him, Souta turned his back towards her.

“….Sorry. I remembered that I have something I need to do, so I’ll be going home for today.”

He spoke quickly, and ran off without waiting for a reply.

Akari raised her hand half-heartedly, but it was felt hanging in the air and eventually dropped limply to her side.

Having been left alone, Akari slowly looked up at the ceiling.

The classroom that Natsuki and Haruki had been in was probably somewhere around here.

“….That’s weird. Why am I crying?”

With no one to hear those whispered words, they disappeared in the chilly hallway.

On the other side of the window, the sunset faded into the night sky.

Unlike the fresh air of summer, the scent of the autumn night was somehow melancholic.

A Solution for Jealousy (Chapter 5)

renna-translations.tumblr.com/post/130904360554/a-solution-for-jealousy-chapter-5

Thanks for waiting! Here's the fifth chapter of the novel adaption of HoneyWorks' "**Yakimochi no Kotae (A Solution for Jealousy)**"!

Masterpost with links to all the translated chapters can be found here.
You can find the masterpost with all the Confession Executive Committee/Sound of Confession series-related translations here.

←Chapter 4 | Chapter 6→

* If you can, I highly encourage supporting the creators by buying the book for yourself at Amazon!

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Hayasaka Akari

Birthday: December 3rd
Horoscope Sign: Sagittarius
Blood Type: O

President of the Art Club. A regular art contest prizewinner.
She's popular with the guys,
but in reality, she's shy,
and still doesn't know what "love" is.

——

solution 5

"Oh, Hayasaka-san, are you here by yourself today?"

"……"

"Hayasaka-saaan? Your phone's been ringing for a while now, you know?"

"….Huh? Wah?!"

Feeling someone suddenly tap her on the shoulder from behind, Akari accidentally dropped her brush on the floor.

Matsukawa-sensei, the one who had been trying to get her attention, also widened her eyes in surprise.

"S-sorry! Are you alright? Did any paint get on your skirt?"

"No, I'm fine…. I'm sorry, I guess I was spacing off…."

As Akari apologized while picking up the brush, Matsukawa-sensei forced a smile and continued,

"Could it be that you didn't hear me until I tapped on your shoulder?"

"Really?"

Akari asked in genuine confusion.

Seeing her react this way, Matsukawa-sensei's smile grew even more forced.

"It's good that you're so focused, but I'd worry about leaving you alone. Where are Enomoto-san and Aida-san today? Didn't I hear their voices earlier?"

"Nacchan had a dentist appointment, and Miou-chan went home with Serizawa-kun."

As she spoke, she felt her chest being struck by an aching sensation.

She should have been happy to see Miou and Haruki talking again for the first time in a while. She was supposed to feel relieved knowing they'd only been avoiding each other because they'd been busy with their respective club activities.

But Akari had witnessed a crucial scene.

‘I didn’t hear Nacchan’s reply, but as for Serizawa-kun….’

“….Is this the painting that the Film Club asked you for?”

Somewhere along the line, Matsukawa-sensei had switched her gaze from Akari to the canvas in front of her.

Akari followed her gaze and looked at the painting that had progressed from the sketching stage.

In a world brimming with layers of color, a male student wearing a gakuran stared out the window.

When she’d first started drawing, it had been a young girl gazing at cherry blossoms in full bloom, but immediately after Souta had shown her the film footage, Akari had ignored her initial sketch and drawn the boy, instead.

’After all, if I were her, I would probably do the same.’

The heroine would soon be parting ways with the person she liked.

In that situation, she’d probably paint a picture of she person she liked in her favorite place, because strong feelings are necessary to finish a single painting.

“What a sad painting,”

After staring at it for some time, Matsukawa-sensei quietly voiced her opinion.

Although Akari usually never talked much about her works, owing to the fact that none of the club members were here today, she found it easier to talk today.

“What I really wanted to draw here was hope, too.”

Surprised that Akari had responded for once, Matsukawa-sensei widened her eyes slightly.

But she didn’t reply with anything more than a simple, “I see.”

“In that case, you just need to find it.”

Akari didn’t know how to respond to that.

But, encouraged by Matsukawa-sensei’s warm gaze, she asked in a faint voice,

“Do you think that I’ll be able to find it?”

“Of course.”

The words of a teacher had a definite weight.

She had lived longer than Akari, and had surely seen countless works of art done by students that she had taught over the years.

“….Well then, I’ll be going back to the preparation room now. Try not to stay too late, alright?”

“I know. Thank you.”

After watching Matsukawa-sensei go into the adjoining room through the inner door, Akari picked up her cell phone that she’d left on the wood table.

The light at the top was flashing repeatedly.

There had been an incoming call, and a voice mail.

“It’s from Mom. I wonder what’s up….?”

As soon as Akari pressed the button to replay the voice mail message, Akari gave a shout of joy.

“Wah, she bought me a cake from Hoshiya!”

It had only just opened at the end of summer vacation, but it already a big hit, probably due to it being conveniently located across from the train station.

And the cakes themselves, in both presentation and taste, were the best, hands down. When she had gone there with Souta, Akari had instantly become a fan.

“Al~right, I’ll do a little more and then head home!”

“Yuki-chaaan, where’d you go~?”

“What about over there~? Did you find him~?”

The moment she got all fired up and pumped her fist in the air, she heard the sound of running and shouting girls from the hallway.

‘Yuki-chan? That’s Ayase-kun, right….?’

She always heard Natsuki call him “Koyuki-kun,” but she knew that some of his classmates, both the boys and the girls, would call him “Yuki-chan”.

Each time, Koyuki would correct them, so it was obvious that he didn’t like being called that.

Those girls probably knew that too, but they continued to call him by that nickname.

’Maybe they only see what’s on the outside when they look at Ayase-kun….’

“Maybe he already went home for today?”

“What should we do? Go and check the flower beds one more time?”

“No way, that’d be a pain….”

The girls seemed to have stopped right in front of the art room, and she could hear their voices clearly.

’I see. So they don’t want to have to help out with the Gardening Club….’

Koyuki, who was in the Gardening Club, would always go to take care of the plants in the courtyard and schoolyard once school was over.

On several occasions, Akari had seen those girls from the art room window, and how they would rush towards him during those times in hopes of a chance to talk to him.

Before summer vacation, they would sometimes help him with his work, but lately, it was different.

’Rather than helping out, they just want to talk with him.’

Koyuki probably realized this as well, and seemed to have hidden himself. The last time this had happened, she had

seen him quietly go back to work only once the girls' voices were completely out of earshot.

He probably didn't plan on starting his club activities today, either, until after the girls had stopped chasing after him.

After the pursuers had apparently given up, she heard the sound of their footsteps going down the hallway one after another.

Akari watched them go through the glass window on the door.

'….I wonder if it's not love that those girls have for Ayase-kun.'

Compared to Natsuki or Miou, their friendliness seemed more superficial.

Koyuki probably sensed that too, which was why he was hiding like this.

Just as she was about to turn her back to the door, she saw something flicker into the corner of her vision.

'Huh? Isn't that….?'

She saw a tuft of soft-looking hair peeking out from behind a pillar in the hallway.

After looking around and making sure that the group of girls had left, he finally emerged from his hiding place.

'I knew it, it's Ayase-kun!'

Koyuki had changed into a track suit and seemed to be heading for his club activities now.

'That's amazing. No matter what happens, he never misses a day to go take care of the flower beds….'

Watching him from afar, Akari felt a warmth in her chest.

'Somehow, it's kind of encouraging…. Hm?'

After taking a deep breath, Koyuki swiftly changed directions and came towards the art room.

Their eyes met through the glass window on the door, and Akari couldn't stop herself from giving a small shout of surprise.

"I apologize for startling you."

"N-no, it's fine…."

Their conversation ended there, and Koyuki turned away.

'Didn't he come to the art room for a reason….?'

Finding this strange, Akari opened the door and called out to Koyuki, who had already started walking away.

"Wait, Ayase-kun! Were you looking for someone?"

"….I forgot to give back the manga that Enomoto-san lent to me, but it doesn't look like she's here today."

'Ah, so that's why he was looking in through the door.'

The paper bag that Koyuki was holding close to him probably contained the manga that he had mentioned.

Akari hesitated for a moment, and decided to offer her help.

“If you’d like, I can pass it on to her for you.”

She knew that since summer vacation had ended, things between Natsuki and Koyuki had been awkward.

It looked like they were still lending manga to each other as they did before, but there was something standoffish between the two of them.

’Nacchan doesn’t seem to be getting along well with Setoguchi-kun, either, plus she was confessed to by Serizawa-kun….’

And now that something seemed to have happened with Koyuki, she must be having a rough time right now.

“There was something I wanted to talk to her about as well, so I’d like to give it back to her directly.”

Something he wanted to talk to about?

She was overcome by an urge to ask, but it was probably something between just the two of them.

Seeing the unyielding resolve reflected in Koyuki’s eyes, Akari held back her question.

“….I see. Sorry for taking up your time.”

“No, it’s fine. Thank you, though.”

Koyuki bowed politely, and went back down the way he’d come.

“….Koyuki-senpai….”

She heard someone whisper.

Turning to see who it was, Akari saw a young girl had come down from the stairs and was watching Koyuki go.

’Where did she come from….?’

She wasn’t wearing her indoor shoes, so it wasn’t clear what grade she was in, but she gave off a feeling of being a bit younger than them.

She must have come running here, as each time the girl breathed heavily, her loosely-tied pigtails would quiver.

-

‘I wonder if she’s in love….’

There was both sadness and passion in the gaze that the girl watched Koyuki with.

Like Natsuki and Miou, they were the eyes of someone looking at the person they liked.

-

“….Ah, I’ve got it!”

Shouting out loud at the “answer” that had suddenly come to her, Akari faced the canvas and started moving her brush,

In order to redraw the hairstyle of the boy in the painting.

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

After finding a good place to stop, Akari finished her work and walked down the slope to the station.

Now that it had gotten so schilly, a scarf was a necessity. She had it wrapped around her neck in a way to bring out the most volume, even burying her nose behind the knitted wool.

'….Isn't she cold?'

For some reason, the girl walking in front of her was holding her scarf in her hand.

Her shoulders were heaving up and down, so she must have been running not too long ago.

Akari was walking at a faster pace than the girl, and would soon catch up to her.

"Huh? Miou-chan?!"

When she was just a few meters away, she realized that it was Miou.

Miou's shoulders shook, startled by Akari's voice.

However, that was her only reaction; she didn't say anything in reply, nor show any signs of stopping or turning around.

Feeling that something was off, Akari ran up to her.

"Miou-chan, let's go home toge–"

When Akari peered into her face from the side, her words trailed off.

Tears were flowing from Miou's eyes, streaming down her reddened cheeks.

"It isn't…. m-me…."

Mious stuttered out between sobs.

Akari gently wrapped an arm around her friend who seemed about to break down crying.

"He said that he has someone he likes already…."

She had an intuitive feeling that she was talking about Haruki.

For Mious to be so shocked she was crying, it could only be because of him.

'Did she say he has someone he likes….?'

She was reminded of the day she'd seen Haruki confess to Natsuki in the classroom after school.

While feeling a stabbing sensation in her chest, Akari nodded.

"I was the only who thought…."

"……"

Akari really wanted to tell her, "That's not true," but Miou probably wouldn't looking for that kind of half-hearted reassurance.

Akari bit down on her lip.

“But I don’t want to give up.”

“Yeah, I know.”

Akari hadn’t said that to comfort her or just to show she was listening. She felt that Miou was probably firm about her feelings, which was why Akari voiced her agreement.

She hadn’t said, “I can’t give up,” but “I don’t want to give up.”

Her words showed her unwavering will.

‘All I can do is cheer her on….’

Akari took a deep breath, and said as cheerfully as she could,

“Come to think of it, I’ve got cake at home!”

“Huh?”

Miou, who had lifted her face, still had tears shimmering in her eyes.

Akari pretended not to notice, and continued with a smile,

“It’s a new menu item from the Hoshiya across the station! Do you want to try some?”

“Y-yeah~!”

As if deciding there was no point in crying anymore, Miou balled both of her hands into fists.

“I can allow myself to eat sweets just for today, can’t I?”

When Miou turned her back towards her, Akari suddenly felt her vision blur.

Feeling a faint heat at the corner of her eyes, she turned her head down so that Miou wouldn’t see.

’Not again…. Why do I keep crying….?’

“Akari-chaaan?”

Hearing Miou, who had already gone ahead, call out to her, Akari hurriedly rubbed her eyes dry.

She looked up just as Miou had turned back to look at her.

’She didn’t see anything, right?’

“C’mon, let’s hurry! The cakes aren’t going to wait, you know?”

“….Ahaha! Looks like we’ll have to race to the station, then.”

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

The following day, Akari sprinted at full-speed down the hill road that led to the station.

Natsuki hadn’t left the art room that long ago. If she ran after her now, she should be able to catch up.

’Nacchan, Nacchan…!’

Akari called out to Natsuki with a voice that she couldn't vocalize.

Even /she found it strange, but right now, she just felt like that she had to catch up to her.

Natsuki had left the classroom immediately after the results of the art contest has been announced.

Unlike the day before, the clubroom had been full of members, waiting along with Akari and the others for Matsukawa-sensei's arrival. At that time, they had still shared a mutual feeling of anxiety.

The cause of their positions being separated was–

'No matter how many times I experience it, this moment is always so unnerving….'

Akari let out a soft sigh amidst all the chattering around her.

She was aware of the others calling her a regular prizewinner, but that didn't mean she wasn't still nervous. On the contrary, it felt like she was being crushed under the pressure.

Having said that, she couldn't let her feelings of unease show on the outside.

Because, even if it was never her intention, people would take it as sarcasm.

After failing several times during middle school, once she entered high school, she would overcome her failures, pretending they were no big deal. If she just kept quiet and laughed it off, no one would blame her for anything.

The door opened with a clatter, and Matsukawa-sensei peeked into the room.

She had a wide smile on her face, and everyone could already tell who had won.

"Hayasaka-san, Aida-san, congratulations!"

Akari's entry had been chosen for the Grand Prize, and Miou's entry had been given an Honorable Mention.

The written notice with the contest results was hung up on the blackboard, and all the club members gathered around excitedly.

"Senpai, congratulations. I knew that you would get picked!"

"Looks like you were able to keep your winning streak~"

"Come to think of, wasn't there also a time when the President and Vice President took 1st and 2nd place together?"

Their cute underclassmen offered words of congratulations one after another.

As Akari thanked them, she noticed Natsuki suddenly getting up from her seat.

She was staring at the paper with the contest results a couple steps back from the circle of people crowded around it.

Finally, she looked up at the ceiling, and then turned her back on the blackboard.

'….Huh?'

She thought that Natsuki was just going back to her seat, but she had instead started gathering up her things.

She shouldered her bag, and stumbling to the door, she started to leave.

“Nacchan? Where’re you going?”

She called out to her out of innocent confusion, but it was possible the other only saw her actions as a nuisance.

After an awkward silence, Natsuki answered without turning around,

“Dentist appointment!”

“Huh? But yesterday, didn’t you already….?”

She should have realized her mistake by now, but she still ended up saying something unnecessary again.

Still, she found herself unable to finish her question.

“Sorry, I gotta go!”

Natsuki shouted, and as if trying to escape, quickly left the art room.

”Nacchan?!”

She called out to Natsuki once more, but she didn’t stop.

After hesitating briefly, Akari ran after Natsuki as fast as she could.

’I wonder if Nacchan took the bus today…..’

Should she get onto the next bus, as well?

But it seemed a little persistent to follow her all the way to her house.

Just as Akari had stopped running to think of what to do, she said a familiar figure up ahead.

’That bag, and that hairstyle….’

Seeing that huge, round bun, Akari confirmed that it was Natsuki.

Although her legs that were screaming from exhaustion, she forced them to move, and shouted at the top of her lungs,

“Nacchan!”

This time, Natsuki couldn’t run after Akari had called out to her.

But she still wouldn’t turn around to face her.

“I’m so glad… I caught up to you…. I thought I’d go home with you.”

Akari said, out of breath, to which Natsuki muttered in reply,

“….Just you? Where’s Miou?”

“Serizawa-kun came looking for her, and she went to go help out the Film Club.”

“I see….”

“Yeah.”

'Hey, Nacchan, why won't you look at me….?'

Wanting to see Natsuki's face, Akari moved to stand in front of her.

Perhaps due to how sudden the action had been, Natsuki didn't try to hide her face from view.

"Nacchan, when are you going to confess to Setoguchi-kun?"

Even Akari hadn't expected the words that had ended up coming out of her mouth.

Natsuki seemed shocked as well, and unable to say a word, could only stare back at her.

She considered taking back what she'd said, or trying to change the subject, but she stopped herself at the last moment.

'It's time to stop avoiding things. Haven't you been waiting for a chance to ask this?'

In order to work up the resolve to ask an even more conclusive question, Akari strengthened her stance.

"Hm? Did you start going out with Ayase-kun?"

"….Akari, why would you ask something like that? What does that have to do with anything?"

Natsuki widened her eyes slightly, and then narrowed them as if glaring at Akari.

She had every right to be angry. If Akari were in Natsuki's shoes, she'd feel annoyed, too.

'But, I think there're things that Nacchan can't see, but I can.'

Akari slowly closed her eyes, and said while holding back her emotions as best as she could.

"I don't really understand you, Nacchan.… You like Setoguchi-kun, and even though you said you'd confess to him for real instead of doing more rehearsals, didn't you go on a date with Ayase-kun?"

"I already said before, that wasn't a date!"

"Miou-chan told me that Ayase-kun probably intended it as a date."

"Wha….?!"

In the heat of the moment, even Miou's name slipped out.

Natsuki seemed rather shocked, her eyes widening.

Tears seemed to have gathered in her eyes as well, and she quickly averted her gaze.

"….I don't know anything about that. Honestly, Koyuki-kun didn't say anything…."

"Nacchan, that's not fair! Are you going to pretend you don't care about Serizawa-kun either?"

This must have been the first time she'd ever interrupted someone as they were speaking.

Fueled by a burst of emotion, Akari couldn't help yelling.

Her voice shook, and her vision quickly became blurry.

"….Akari….?"

Natsuki had turned her face away, but she was now looking at her with confusion.

Having never seen her like this before, she seemed at a loss with what to do.

'That's right. Whenever I was around Nacchan, and Miou-chan…. I always held back somehow….'

That was the lighter way to put it, but it was probably more like she kept herself on guard.

She made sure to always smile, and was careful to never let them see her angry or cry.

That way, they would always just laugh things off as her being overly optimistic.

'But.… this wasn't what I wanted….'

She'd only wanted to hear Natsuki's true feelings, not make her upset.

And now that she'd ended up crying, knowing how kind Natsuki was, she'd probably blame herself.

"I'll admit that I acted unfairly about some things,"

Just as she had feared, Natsuki started to speak, though with difficulty.

Akari hurriedly tried to deny what she'd said, but she didn't speak quickly enough.

"But, what did you mean about Haruki…?"

With the words that Natsuki spoke next, she was no longer blaming herself.

Feeling relieved, Akari sniffed and mumbled,

"Natsuki-chan, you were the only one that he said he liked."

"….Eh?"

It appeared that Natsuki had no idea what she was talking about.

Seeing Natsuki's eyes dart around, as if tracing back her memories, Akari quickly blurted out,

"Nacchan, just be honest and tell me the truth. Because in the end, he never said he liked my drawings, or Miou-chan's either, you know?"

"…..Huh?"

From Akari's point of view, she had stated very clearly what had been on her mind, but Natsuki just seemed to grow even more confused.

At this point, perhaps it would be best to put a stop to it now.

That thought passed through her head, but now that she'd gotten into it, she couldn't stop herself from continuing.

"As I was drawing the pictures to be used in the movie, I thought about a lot of things. I wondered, what is love? What kind of feeling is it? And then I realized that, for me, it's the same as when I'm drawing, or when I'm looking at a drawing that I like."

Because she'd blurted everything out so quickly, it wasn't until a moment later before her face started to heat up.

'Nacchan, just say something already….!'

Hoping, almost angrily, that she would hurry up and speak, Natsuki held her head in confusion, muttering “Huh? Huh?” repeatedly.

And then, pointing at Akari, she said slowly, as if making sure of something.

“From your point of view, because Haruki said that he liked my drawings, you think that….”

“He likes you, right?”

“S-so that’s what it was…..”

As she said this, Natsuki sunk down weakly into a crouching position.

’Is she thinking what I’m thinking….?’

Natsuki must have thought that Akari had happened to see Haruki confess to her.

Even though that was exactly what had happened, Akari had no intention of blaming her.

Because there were other secrets that she needed to keep.

“Hm? Was there something else?”

Akari bent down to peer into Natsuki’s face.

She looked like she wanted to say something, but suddenly, a smile came onto her face.

“….Hey, Akari, what do you think about my drawings?”

“I like them. A lot.”

After answering, Akari blinked in surprise at herself with a, “Huh?!”

Come to think of it, Haruki had complimented Natsuki’s drawings, too.

Then, when Haruki had said he “liked” her, did he actually mean her drawings rather than Natsuki herself?

’Nacchan…. Is she trying to get me off the topic….?’

As Akari stared at her, Natsuki smiled sheepishly.

“….I like your drawings too, Akari. I admire that unique atmosphere it has. And I like Miou’s delicate, and detailed drawings, too. I want to look at them forever.”

’I’m so embarrassed…. Why did I ever doubt her?’

It was true that Haruki had confessed to Natsuki.

But she didn’t know whether Natsuki had accepted it at face value or not.

Knowing that Miou had feelings for Haruki, Natsuki’s behavior hasn’t changed until today.

That meant that there wasn’t anything else to hold against her.

“Nacchan! Nacchaaan!”

Unable to stand it any longer, Akari clung onto Natsuki.

“Wahh?! Hey, Akari, I can’t breathe….!”

“….I’m sorry for saying things like I did.”

The tears just kept on coming, and her voice shook at the end when she spoke.

Regardless of the fact that her shoulder would get wet, Natsuki hugged Akari back tightly.

“No, I’m the one that’s really sorry.”

’But you did nothing wrong, Nacchan….’

Then who *was* in the wrong?

As they tried to figure out who liked who, important feelings were just passing by them, unnoticed.

Akari was no exception.

Every time she thought about Haruki now, her chest would start to hurt.

She didn’t know what name to call them by, but the feelings she had towards him were pure.

’That’s why it’s painful, and sad…. But still so hard to run away from.’

Miou had said that she didn’t want to give up.

Haruki had told Natsuki his feelings, and even now, Natsuki still had feelings for Yuu.

No one knew where these entangled threads ended.

’I need to give Mochizuki-kun a proper answer, too….’

Even if Souta was no longer waiting on one, Akari was starting to feel like she wanted to answer him.

Above the hill road was a clear, autumn sky without a single cloud to be seen.

It was a beautiful blue color, such that it seemed to take in all of their worries.

A Solution for Jealousy (Chapter 6)

renna-translations.tumblr.com/post/139522789174/a-solution-for-jealousy-chapter-6

Apologies for the incredibly long wait! Here's the sixth chapter of the novel adaption of HoneyWorks' "**Yakimochi no Kotae (A Solution for Jealousy)**"! Thank you so much for your patience, enjoy! Just two more chapters left!

Masterpost with links to all the translated chapters can be found here.
You can find the masterpost with all the Confession Executive Committee/Sound of Confession series-related translations here.

←Chapter 5 | Chapter 7→

* If you can, I highly encourage supporting the creators by buying the book for yourself at Amazon!

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Aida Miou

Birthday: March 20th
Horoscope Sign: Pisces
Blood Type: O

Vice President of the Art Club. A hard worker,
and close friends with Akari and Natsuki.
Always walks home together with Haruki,
but she hides her feelings.

——

solution 6

'What the hell, what the hell, what the hell….!'

Irritated by the scene that kept replaying in his head, Souta fled up the stairs.

Running out of the hallway, he forced open the poorly-fitted door of the clubroom.

“W-woah!”

Yuu, who had been the only one left in the room, seemed quite startled, and dropped the script that he’d been holding onto the desk.

He gave Souta, who was breathing heavily, a strange look, and then looked behind him questionably and said,

“That was quick. Wait, Haruki isn’t with you?”

Souta nodded.

He was still trying to catch his breath, so it was hard to try and talk just yet.

It had been ten minutes since Souta had gone to look for Haruki, who still hadn’t come back from going to the vending machines.

He’d run into Akari along the way, and then—

Souta bit his lip when that scene flashed through his mind again.

'Should I tell Yuu about this? Or keep it a secret? ….What should I do….'

He was still unsure, but before he could come to a decision, his mouth moved on its own.

“O-okay, I have to tell you something, so stay calm, alright?”

There, he said it.

Now that it was out, and more importantly, due to his personality, it was difficult to keep pretending like he hadn’t seen anything

Besides, Yuu had good intuition, so even if he tried to hide it from him, he would probably find out eventually.

Seeing Yuu nod, Souta made up his mind.

“J-just now, in the classroom… I-I saw Haruki c-confessing to Natsuki…!”

He probably hadn’t expected that at all. Yuu had frozen on the spot, as if he’d forgotten how to blink.

Eventually, Yuu let out a low growl and tore at his hair in open frustration.

And then, as if you get rid of his pent-up anger, he clicked his tongue and cursed under his breath.

“Damn it…”

‘At this rate, I’m sure Yuu’s just going to keep his feelings all bottled up inside.’

Compared to Souta, who was still bubbling with anger, his childhood friend seemed mature in doing that.

But at the same time, he also seemed equally childish.

“….You know, Yuu, it’s kind of like you’re a jack of all trades but master of none.”

Yuu seemed to have heard Souta mutter this.

“Huh?” He replied vaguely, and turned to look at Souta with sluggish movements.

‘So he really is *mad.’*

Souta shrugged his shoulders, and spoke in a chastising tone.

“Getting annoyed, clicking your tongue, pulling at your hair, and then you just give up? Why not just scream out how you’re feeling? Like, ‘You’ve gotta be kidding me!’ or something. Are you that scared of showing your emotions?”

The words he flung out were much more provocative and merciless than the comments that made them call him “Black Mochita”.

On the hand, Yuu seemed to have calmed down now, and he spoke in an indifferent tone,

“….Even if I do that, it won’t change what’s already happened.”

“Maybe you’re right, but what will happen to your feelings now that they have nowhere to go?”

“Who knows? They’ll probably just fade away eventually.”

As Yuu gave half-hearted replies, Souta challenged him even further.

“They won’t fade away. They’ll just pile up in the bottom of your heart. It’s kind of sad that those feelings are being ignored by their own owner.”

This time, Yuu’s eyes twitched.

The agitation seemed to sweep over his entire body, making him slump weakly in the end.

“….Then, what am I supposed to do…”

Hearing Yuu speak in this strained voice, as if he were about to cry, Souta felt a sharp pain in his chest.

‘What the hell am I doing….? It’s like I’m just venting my anger.’

That’s right, he was just completely putting the blame on Yuu.

When he’d caught Haruki confessing to Natsuki, Souta’s head had gone completely blank.

And then, worried about how Akari was reacting, he’d seen her so upset and received an even bigger shock. He realized that he really *had* just been misunderstanding things.

’She didn’t accept my confession, but it’s not like she rejected me, either. And since we even went to eat take together, I thought we were doing like a trial period….’

He’d interpreted things in a way that made it more convenient for himself, and gotten his hopes up.

Although Akari had said that she didn’t really understood love, he had read that as her not having anyone she liked, so that it would seem like he had some kind of chance. But—

’Even if she didn’t realize what it was, she probably still ended up falling in love.’

With Haruki’s confession as the trigger, her feelings had surfaced all at once.

After realizing Akari’s true feelings, though he reall wished he hadn’t, Souta couldn’t help but think,

If only Yuu had confessed to Natsuki sooner.

If they’d been dating, Haruki probably wouldn’t have confessed to Natsuki.

Maybe then—

’Would things have been different now? Really?’

Souta slowly walked up to the long desk, and gathered up the scattered papers.

“If it were me, I’d write the things I was feeling right now into a script.”

He’d said those words mainly for himself.

Strangely enough, just by saying it out loud, Souta felt like things were starting to clear up.

“….Huh?”

Taken aback, Yuu lifted his head and looked at Souta quizzically.

Rather than explaining, Souta laughed quietly and started writing on the paper with a mechanical pencil.

He wrote things down just the way they came to mind, stopping now and then to underline things, and add words here and there.

’I see. I get it now. This is what I wanted to do all along.’

Feeling Yuu staring at him blankly, Souta suddenly spoke as if remembering something,

“Starting now, I’m just going to be talking to myself, so just ignore me,”

In a strangely calm tone, he started talking without waiting for Yuu’s reply.

“I’m hoping to get into university by recommendation. That’s why I’ve been talking a lot with the guidance counselor,

Handa-sensei…. and I heard him say that Haruki might be studying at a university in America."

"What?"

He heard Yuu say in a raspy voice, but he simply continued talking.

He told him about everything he'd seen and heard that day in the faculty room.

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

It happened while Souta was in the middle of his evaluation meeting with Handa-sensei after they'd finished with his practice interview.

He'd been in the faculty room afterschool, which was filled with a peculiar atmosphere now that mostly everyone else had gone home, nervously listening to his assessment.

"Mochizuki, your short essay is good, but…."

"Thank you!"

The relief he felt lasted for only a brief moment, as Handa-sensei soon looked coolly down at the assessment sheet.

"Yes, but as for the interview, the most important part…."

"I-I tried to show how honest I am through my unsteadiness!"

"You should use concrete previous experiences for that. While it may be fine while you're still here at this school, if you can't even sound confident when saying your motives, you're going to have a hard time during the examination for the university."

"I-I understand…."

It was just as the teacher said. While he'd been given a recommendation, if he wasn't able to do well during the interview at the university entrance exam, it wouldn't mean anything. It made him even more worried knowing that he was the type that had a hard time speaking once he got nervous.

'What am I going to do? Will I make it in time for the real thing?'

Even before today's mock interview, Yuu had helped him practice many times, but in the end, he'd get too nervous to say what he wanted to say.

'Maybe I should ask another teacher for help instead.'

Looking around the faculty room, a man wearing a long, white coat caught his eye.

He had talked to Akechi-sensei before more than Handa-sensei, and he didn't got too nervous around him, either. He would be the perfect "adult" to practice expressing his opinions with.

'I'll practice until I'm better with Akechi-sensei first, and then ask another teacher again!'

Just as Souta was about to try asking him, Akechi-sensei said something that him stop in his tracks.

"Good job, Serizawa! Looks like you passed the secondary judging, too."

'Secondary judging.…? Are they talking about the contest?'

While Souta felt happy for him, there was also something that bothered him.

Neither he nor Yuu had heard anything from Haruki about passing the preliminary judging, let alone the secondary judging.

Haruki and Akechi-sensei didn't seem to notice Souta standing there, and continued talking amongst themselves.

"Which one are you talking about?"

"The one that comes with the study abroad in America."

"Seriously?! That's awesome!"

Seeing Haruki throw up both of his hands in joy, Souta felt like he was watching him on a movie screen.

'Which one? So that means he entered two different contests? And one comes with a study abroad in America, too?'

That was news to him. And a shocking one, at that.

Haruki had told Yuu and Souta that the contest prize was a video editing software.

It wasn't very likely that it would suddenly change to a study abroad trip to America, so it must have been another contest that he hadn't told them about.

"Good going for Serizawa, huh? He'll probably have good chances of getting into a university that way."

Souta flinched a little when he heard Handa-sensei suddenly come up behind him and comment in admiration.

The teachers knew that Haruki and Souta were in the same club, as well as childhood friends. Since they got along so well, they probably assumed that Souta had already heard about Haruki's post-graduation plans.

He didn't feel like clearing up that misunderstanding, and instead simply answered by forcing a smile onto his stiff face.

'Haruki planned on leaving not just our area, but Japan altogether without telling either of us….'

The truth that he said aloud to himself slowly ate away at Souta's heart.

Even though they were in the same room, within shouting distance even, Haruki felt so far away.

He betrayed us.

I'm so jealous.

I admire him.

He left us behind.

I have to support him.

Many different feelings floated up, making him feel like he was standing in the middle of a storm.

When he could no longer bear standing there any longer, Souta silently lowered his head and left the faculty room.

Since he'd left the room, he had no idea what Akechi-sensei and Haruki talked about afterwards.

But knowing Akechi-sensei, he was probably supportive of his student going to study abroad.

And Haruki must have grinned so wide his teeth showed.

'Even though we've been left out of the loop….'

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

Yuu listened to the whole story in a daze.

Souta understood how he felt. He still haven't fully accepted it, either.

But that didn't change what had happened, and time stopped for no one.

'Once spring comes, Haruki is going to study abroad….'

"What the hell…."

When Yuu finally spoke, that was all he could say.

Yuu fell silent again after that, and Souta couldn't find anything to say, either.

'Yuu probably feels the same as me. Not just about Haruki not telling us, but the fact that it's like he's leaving us behind, too….'

Souta continued moving his pencil, desperately chasing after the "light" he had found.

"….As for me, I still haven't found anything like that to be passionate about."

Were those words directed at Haruki? Or were they meant for Souta?

Yuu laughed with self-mockery, and looked up at the ceiling.

"There you go again… Saying things like that and putting yourself down."

"No, but it's the truth…"

As Yuu shrugged, Souta shot him a piercing look.

"It's because of you giving me that push from behind that I can write scripts like this now."

"……..What?"

Yuu was neither joking nor acting; he genuinely froze on the spot.

"Hold on, you don't remember?"

Souta tried asking just to be sure, but Yuu still seemed confused.

Souta sighed, and supposing it couldn't be helped, retold the memory of that day.

"—I don't have natural talent like Haruki does, and I'm not good at handling schedules like you do, or managing a lot of people to work together…. The most I can do is just run errands."

Seeming to finally remember, Yuu's breath caught.

"Didn't you say something like this this last year, too…?"

"You're so slow~ At this rate, you probably don't even remember the things you say yourself."

As Souta threw a resentful glance at him, Yuu answered with a wry smile.

“What’re you talking about? You have talent with script writing, Mochita.”

All he did was repeat the same line as back then.

But both Yuu and Souta smiled naturally.

“I’m just a perfectly normal person, with nothing special in particular. But even for someone like me, there was a speck of talent, so I’m sure that there’s something for you too, Yuu.”

“….I’ll try looking for it.”

He saw sure that Yuu also knew it was something that was easier said than done.

For people like Haruki and Akari, who had almost blinding talent, even if they didn’t realize it themselves, it was something that those around them couldn’t ignore.

They’d find themselves looking up at the light that they’d found like a bright, shining star.

’It makes me feel kinda of envious, but if it’s Yuu, I’m sure he’ll be able to find it on their own.’

Souta recalled the words of a certain film director.

Talent is the ability to continue being passionate about something.

If it had been that way for Souta, he was sure that Yuu would be able to find it, too:

The fragment of blinding light that lit his passion.

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

Several days had passed since Souta saw Haruki confess to Natsuki.

Souta and Haruki were alone together in the clubroom afterschool, and things felt awkward between them.

’….No, it’s probably just me that feels that way.’

Yuu has gone home early to prepare for the national mock exam at his prep school that weekend.

Since the future of their precious childhood friend was at stake, Souta and Haruki had willingly sent him off. However, Souta was already wishing Yuu would come back.

He glanced over to check on Haruki, and their eyes met, as Haruki had been looking in his direction, as well.

Unintentionally turning his face away, he heard a wry laugh from in front of him.

“What? Going through puberty or something?”

Haruki spoke jokingly, as usual. It would be appropriate for him to just reply back as usual.

Souta knew this, but with his heart in such disorder, he ended up saying something else entirely.

“You know, I got my recommendation to be admitted into university.”

“Seriously?! Congrats, good for you!”

“Thanks. Haruki, don’t you also….”

“Hm?”

Souta had trailed off after seeing the pure and nonchalant smile that Haruki had given him.

But not wanting to keep holding onto this one-sided grudge all the way up until graduation, he made up his mind to ask.

“Haruki, don’t you also have something to say?”

“….With the way this is going, it should be good news too, right?”

“Yeah, sounds about right.”

Haruki seemed to have guessed what he wanted to ask, dropping his gaze and scratching at his head uncomfortably.

He reluctantly opened and closed his mouth a few times, and then finally, he muttered together with a sigh,

“Sorry. I didn’t want to jinx it, or well, I was going to wait until it was official before I said anything.”

“I see. That makes sense; with contests, you never know what’ll happen until the very end. I think it’d be hardest on you if you got everyone involved just to get their hopes up and then disappoint them if it didn’t work out.”

“Pretty much. But this isn’t about whether or not you can understand my intentions, right?”

Haruki pointed at Souta’s brow, and let out a troubled laugh.

Unable to hide the fact that he was disgruntled now that it’d been pointed out that it showed on his face, he furrowed his brow even more.

“Since you’ve figured out that much, I’ll just get straight to the point. What are you going to do about Natsuki?”

“….I’m surprised. You sound just like Yuu talking like that, Mochita.”

Don’t say it like you didn’t expect that.

Resisting the urge to snap back, Souta kept his composure and continued.

“I saw you confess to her. What was that all about?”

He wondered how Haruki was going to respond.

As he watched him with bated breath, the next thing that Haruki said was shocking.

“Yeah, I thought so.”

“….Huh?”

“I thought I saw you. Wasn’t that Hayasaka with you that time?”

“How can you say that so casually?! Akarin was….!”

If he let slip the fact about how shocked Akari had been, that would mean giving away the truth about her feelings.

Realizing that he had to avoid that at all costs, Souta suppressed his anger.

“I’m going to ask you one more time. What was that all about?”

The sharp gaze that Souta looked at him with was enough to make even someone as cheerful as Haruki stop smiling.

“It was a confession rehearsal. It’s pretty nerve-wrecking to confess to someone, right? So Natsuki recommended that I practice first, and I asked her to be my practice partner. That’s all.”

“….Wh-what the hell?!”

As Souta unintentionally shouted, Haruki said with a smug face,

“Like I said, it was just a confession rehearsal.”

Feeling his head start to pound with pain, Souta slumped against the long desk.

“….So that means that you *don’t* like Natsuki like that?”

“Yeah, basically.”

“Then why don’t you just confess for real already?”

“……”

He finally had Haruki pinned down, but it wasn’t something he could openly celebrate about.

Things were starting to feel tense between them, and he could tell Haruki was uneasy.

Amidst all this, Souta felt like he was overstepping his boundaries as a friend.

-

’If I’m going to turn back, I should do it now.’

Even if he didn’t hurry and throw away that festering grudge, they could probably resolve things with time.

It would be stupid to ruin a friendship over matters of love.

’Haruki, I know it’s none of my business but, I’m worried about you, too.’

As he tried to control the noisy beating of his heart under his shirt, Souta said as if pressing him for an answer,

“Oh, I get it. It’s not that you *won’t* confess, it’s because you *can’t*, right? Since you might be going to study abroad at a university in America if you win that contest.”

When he put emphasis on the word “can’t,” Haruki raised an eyebrow.

Maybe that small detail had been enough to give away his true intentions.

Somewhat embarrassed now, Souta mumbled his next words.

“….So? Is that why?”

“You know, Mochita, you always take notice of other people. Plus, you’re a good guy that worries about others.”

As Haruki nodded in agreement to his own words, Souta cooly cut him off.

“Enough with that. I’m not going to stop pressing you even if you throw compliments at me.”

“I know. I’m just saying what I really think.”

Since Haruki was being so much more serious than usual, it was Souta who was starting to get confused now.

“H-huh? I’m asking just in case, but does that still have anything to do with what we were talking about?”

“….You know something? There’s no one I value more than myself. There are times I don’t care about anything besides making movies, and I’m willing to do anything in order to make a good movie.”

’*I see. So that’s how Haruki sees things.’*

There was more that Souta wanted to say, but not wanting to interrupt Haruki now that he was starting to talk without restraint, he merely nodded silently.

“The American university that I’d be studying abroad at is famous for their film program, so naturally, I’d be happy to study there, and I see it as a great chance for me. But….”

Though Haruki’s gaze had been so straight and resolute, he suddenly lowered it.

Souta could more or less figure out what he wanted to say next, and encouraged him by muttering a quiet, “Yeah.”

“I realized that there’s something else important to me besides movies.”

“….Have you told her about this?”

Although he already knew how Haruki was going to respond, he still dared to ask.

Sure enough, Haruki shook his head.

“No. At first, I planned to tell her only if it guaranteed I was going, but that probably won’t work. If I’m unlucky, I’ll probably just tell her anyway.”

Souta couldn’t find any words to say to Haruki as he gave a weak laugh.

The fact that he’d been the one to make him say that made his chest clench.

“….It’d be tough to be separated right off the bat. And it wouldn’t even just somewhere else in the country, but America! That pretty much doubles my chances of being rejected.”

“……”

“Heeey, isn’t this where you say something like, ‘You sure are confident about winning that prize, huh?’”

Haruki was trying to lighten the situation, to the point of imitating him.

Although Souta knew he should go along with this, he instead chose to be straightforward.

“But she has the freedom to choose, too. You’re taking all these extra measures right now to plan it out beforehand, but she might say that she doesn’t mind it being long distance, you know?”

Instead of a reply, the chair he was sitting in sounded with a clatter.

Haruki placed his hands on the desk with a blank expression, looking down at Souta.

Souta was prepared to be yelled at this time for sure, but instead, Haruki walked over to the window.

“….I told you, didn’t I? In the end, the one I really value the most is myself. Being rejected, and having a long distance relationship go poorly, I’d hate both of those just as much.”

“Because you don’t want to be hurt?”

Haruki continued without turning around.

“And to top it all off, even while we’re having this whole conversation, I’m still thinking about movies somewhere in the corner of my mind. Not just about my new work, but about how this experience could benefit me, things like that.”

What the hell? You say such self-centered things.

That was the impression that Souta got.

But if he told him, he had a feeling Haruki would just laugh it off, saying, “You’re so emotional.”

After hesitating, Souta decided to make a comeback with a logical statement.

“You’re contradicting yourself. Being rejected, or failing at a long distance relationship, wouldn’t they be ‘good experiences’? They’d make sufficient nutrition for making movies, right?”

“….I’m a picky eater.”

It was obvious that he was being driven in a corner.

Haruki was probably thinking really hard right now about how to avoid Souta’s questions.

’I probably said too much. I should just leave it at that.’

Rather than apologizing, Souta chose to change the subject, instead.

“By the way, about the screening, has it been officially arranged yet?”

“….The Student Council sent us the document for it.”

About a week ago, the Student Council had heard about their new video project, and proposed they hold a screening for it the day before the graduation ceremony.

Since the movie happened to also be about a graduation ceremony, the viewers would end up having a bias as they watched, and not be able to appreciate the movie’s appeal and power on their own.

On that note, Souta and the others had turned them down several times, but in the end, with the Student Council President being an avid fan of the Film Club, the director, Haruki, had given into his enthusiasm, and the screening had been arranged.

“You know, there’s a scene I really want to include.”

“….But we don’t have any time left, you know? Have you talked it over with Yuu?”

“It’s just so nice out today. It’s like the perfect day for filming.”

“Like I said, have you discussed the schedule with Yuu yet?”

“There’s no time like the present! Mochita, get the camera!”

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

The two of them had come to a park that was a short walking distance from the nearest station.

It'd be cutting it close, but with the swings and benches dyed in the colors of the setting sun, it was the perfect chance for shooting some good footage, just like Haruki said.

-

"Hey, didn't that girl just now look kind of like Natsuki?"

"You sure it wasn't someone else? You see a lot of girls dressed like that."

"Well, obviously. They all have the same uniform. But you don't see too many with that hairstyle…."

Unsure if Haruki was joking or actually being serious, Souta was about to make a retort, but at the sight of a certain person, he paused.

There was someone he recognized standing by the sandbox.

Although slightly unnerved by the atmosphere surrounding the boy, Souta slowly approached him.

The other seemed to have noticed him approaching, and turned around to face him.

'I knew it, it's Yukki…..'

"What're you living here? Isn't your house on the other side of town?"

"….I see. So Mocchi and Serizawa-kun live around here, too."

Although he felt something off about Koyuki's words, Souta nodded.

"Our director kept saying how there was an extra scene that he had to film no matter what, so…."

He gestured with his chin over at Haruki, who had his back turned towards them and was busying himself with setting up the position of the camera.

Koyuki chucked and said with a shrug of his shoulders, "You must be really busy, then."

"What about you, Yukki? What were you doing?"

"….There was something I was planning on doing, but I wasn't able to."

"Huh?"

Souta looked at Koyuki, wondering if he'd misheard something, but Koyuki was looking outside of the park.

'*Could he be waiting for someone? But he spoke using the past tense, so…..'*

"Hey, about what you said earlier!"

Haruki shouted as he tightened the knobs on the tripod.

"You said that Mochita and I lived around here, 'too,' so who else did you mean?"

Souta made a sound of realization, now knowing why Koyuki's words had sounded odd before.

He recalled the girl they'd seen on their way to the park, and gradually started to put the pieces together.

The thing that Koyuki had been planning to do, but haven't been able to—

"You're good friends with Serizawa-kun, after all, so you must be curious about it, right?"

Haruki burst out laughing at Koyuki's daring suggestion, as if he found something funny about it.

"Nah, you're misunderstanding. I mean, Yuu's not my only childhood friend, you know?"

'Ah, right. There's also me, right? ….But that's probably not the point here.'

Koyuki seemed confused for a moment, but he soon realized what Haruki was getting at.

"Enomoto-san is your childhood friend, too, isn't she?"

"Right. So, did you mean you were planning to 'confess,' but couldn't do it?"

As if as payback for Koyuki's accusation earlier, Haruki asked a malicious question.

While Koyuki still had a smile on his face, Souta, who was listening from the sidelines, started panicking.

"H-hey, hold on, Haruki! We can't just butt in like this just because we're all childhood friends!"

"It's an issue that came up prior to even confessing."

"Yukki, you too! You don't have to say anything if you don't want to….!"

Despite Souta's efforts to put a stop to this, Koyuki continued, unfazed.

"I simply watched Enomoto-san go, unable to say anything."

Koyuki told them all of this indifferently, but there was something dejected about the tone of his voice.

Souta felt sad just listening to him, and looked at Koyuki, who had lowered his gaze.

'I wonder if Yukki thinks poorly of himself because of that….'

"Are you sure it wasn't because you *couldn't* confess, but because you *chose* not to?"

Haruki asked Koyuki, phrasing it similarly to how Souta had earlier.

Koyuki lifted his face in surprise, his lips quivering.

"I never expected her to accept my feelings. But, at the very least, I thought I'd tell her how I felt…. I tried changing my appearance, how I looked out on the outside, but…. It was pointless."

'No way…. But he worked so hard….'

Souta became further saddened at how Koyuki wouldn't recognize his own efforts.

But with how Koyuki spoke as if he'd already given this a lot of thought, even Haruki couldn't say anything.

"I knew that my feelings would only be a burden to her."

"That's not…."

Unable to hold it in any longer, Souta tried cutting in.

But Koyuki only smiled softly and shook his head, leaving Souta no choice but to keep silent.

“….It’s because Natsuki has someone she likes, huh?”

Haruki muttered, but not as an actual question.

For some reason, that struck a nerve with Souta.

“Even if she does like someone else, that doesn’t mean that Yukki’s feelings would be a burden!”

Souta was upset, and had shouted in a louder voice than he’d intended to.

Koyuki widened his eyes, but when he spoke, he was an indifferent as before.

“That’s also one way of looking at it.”

‘How can Yukki be so calm about this?’

It was obvious that Koyuki was shocked, but he was trying not to let it show.

He was so much stronger, and dignified, than Souta had ever imagined.

“Maybe….”

Koyuki’s voice caused a slight tension in the air.

He could tell that Koyuki was hesitating to continue, so Souta gave a small nod as if to encourage him. Haruki had also abandoned his camera, and was waiting attentively.

“Maybe if I had told her my feelings, it might have become some form of strength for her, or helped push her forward. But, I imagined a different outcome….”

How long did the silence go on?

Losing himself in the chorus of the autumn insects, Souta simply waited.

Finally, Koyuki seemed to have made up his mind, and told them his true feelings.

“She’s a kind person, so I think she would have worried about not being able to return my feelings. Even after she’d rejected me, I think they would continue to remain in her heart, weighing down on it, for a long time.”

Souta felt like he’d been struck in the head. That was the extent of his shock, so much that he forget to even breathe.

’But I don’t understand why Yukki’s feelings would be a burden for Natsuki…. In the first place, he’s already assuming he’d be rejected?’

Since Souta had always thought rather lowly of himself, never holding very high hopes for his own feelings being returned, maybe that was why he was so upset with Koyuki.

But Koyuki’s sincere words didn’t convey that same kind of impression at all.

’Yukki’s accepted the truth, and put Natsuki’s feelings first to the very end….’

He must have gone through tremendous shock when he realized he wouldn’t be able to have a relationship with her.

But despite that, Koyuki chose to avoid hurting her at all costs.

Even if that meant sacrificing his own feelings.

Some people might say it was cowardly to let things ends without ever confessing.

But Souta found Koyuki's choice to be incredibly admirable.

'So there's this kind of love, too….'

At that moment, he felt like a ray of light had shone into the bottom of his heart, which had been spiraling for so long.

No matter who Akari liked, he couldn't throw away his own feelings.

Even if he couldn't support Akari's love, he could still watch over her.

'I don't care if these feelings are one-sided; I'll love enough for the both of us.'

Repeating to himself a line he'd heard in the movie he'd watched last night, Souta looked up at the sky.

There were only a few bright stars in the autumn sky, and none that stood out like the Summer Triangle.

But that's what made the great nebulas and star clusters stand out all the more.

"I'm sure it's the same way for relationships."

Before anyone could hear those muttered words, they were swept away by the wind.

A Solution for Jealousy (Chapter 7)

renna-translations.tumblr.com/post/149727634714/a-solution-for-jealousy-chapter-7

Look, I'm not dead!! And neither is this project! I happened to see the movie a total of three times while in Japan for the various tokuten and special screenings….

Apologies for the incredibly long wait (again)! Here's the seventh chapter of the novel adaption of HoneyWorks' "**Yakimochi no Kotae (A Solution for Jealousy)** "! Thank you so much for your patience, enjoy! Only the epilogue left now!

Masterpost with links to all the translated chapters can be found here.

You can find the masterpost with all the Confession Executive Committee/Sound of Confession series-related translations here.

←Chapter 6 | Epilogue→

* If you can, I highly encourage supporting the creators by buying the book for yourself at Amazon!

——

In just one day, with just a few words, your life can change dramatically.

But in order to make that change a reality, you need courage.

“I finished the manga, so I’ll be confessing today!”

Natsuki had said to Akari and Miou, and boldly headed for the battlefield.

And with that happy announcement, she taught them that courage can change everything.

She’d told them about how she’d been pretty nervous even during the confession rehearsals, so the real thing was sure to be at least ten times worse.

In any case, the one Natsuki would be confessing to was her childhood friend that she was next-door-neighbors with. It wasn’t something Akari wanted to think about, but in the case that her feelings were rejected, there was a risk of their friendship being lost, as well.

‘But Nacchan didn’t run away.’

It probably wasn’t because she was confident about her chances of success. She simply went to see Yuu with her chest full of her feelings for him.

”I’ll tell you guys the details tomorrow at school.”

With her heart pounding over the last line in the text, Akari had trouble getting much sleep that night.

This morning, her alarm clock had stopped ringing long before she had rushed out of the house with barely any breakfast. She didn’t want to miss a single second of what Natsuki had to say.

But, even so….

The situation had taken a turn in a direction outside of Akari’s expectations.

Hearing the chime for lunch, Akari exchanged looks with Miou.

As with anything, it was always the first stages that were most important, and after what they’d seen of Natsuki and Yuu since that morning, the two were overcome by an indescribable uneasiness.

“Miou-chan, should we go to the art room today? Or the prep room?”

“I dunno…. Won’t she realize right away?”

As they leaned close together and spoke in whispers, they felt someone come up to them from behind.

Akari felt that she shouldn’t turn around, so instead, it was Natsuki that spoke first.

“Are you guys talking about where to have lunch? It’s so nice out today, so why don’t we go to the courtyard?”

Something terrible had happened. No, it was still too early to give up all hope just yet.

Akari awkwardly turned her head, and confirmed with Natsuki subtly,

“You mean, with the three of us?”

“Eh? ….Ah, sure! Are you inviting anyone else?”

Nacchan, you’re the one that’s supposed to invite someone else!

Holding back the urge to make that rebuttal, Akari glanced over at Yuu.

It looked like Yuu was heading to the cafeteria with Souta, as well as Haruki, who had come over from the class next door.

’H-huh? Wait, even Setoguchi-kun….?!’

With her face paling, Akari looked at Miou for help.

But Miou had her eyebrows furrowed as well, seemingly in the middle of thinking of a way out.

At this rate, Natsuki and Yuu would end up eating lunch separately.

’No, anything but that! I have to do something!’

Making sure that she was loud enough for Yuu and the others to hear, Akari asked Natsuki,

“N-Nacchan, isn’t there someone else besides us that you want to eat your bento with?”

“Th-that’s right! Think reaaally hard, okay?”

Thanks to Miou being quick to pitch in, it seemed like they’d succeeded in getting Yuu and the others’ attention.

Relieved to hear them stop walking, Akari continued in order to get Natsuki to realize her point.

“Like, for example…. Y-your boyfriend?”

Far from being a straight ball, it was a pitch as wild as a hard fastball.

Though she hadn’t planned on just spelling it out like this, it was too late now.

As expected, that was enough for even Natsuki to catch on, making her expression freeze in place.

“Is that why you guys have been acting weird since this morning?”

Speaking as quietly as possible, Akari and Miou took hold of each other’s hand.

“I mean! Both you and Setoguchi-kun are acting the same way around one another as you always have!”

“Nacchan, I know you’re probably just embarrassed, but if you’re with us, it’ll probably be harder for Setoguchi-kun to come up and talk to you….”

Now that it’d come to this, they had no choice but to tell her everything, but Natsuki only squared her shoulders stubbornly.

“I-It’s fine! For Yuu and I, this is normal!”

The other three that were watching from the sidelines also seemed to have figured out what Akari was trying to say.

Haruki burst out laughing, Souta was holding back his laughter, and Yuu had turned red up to his ears and was looking at the ceiling.

“Didn’t I tell you? That playing it off like that was just going to cause misunderstandings?”

Haruki pointed this out seriously, but he was clearly grinning as he did.

“It’d be pretty lame if people started thinking you were breaking up the very next day after you guys got together.”

Souta added with a meek look on his face, but the corners of his mouth were twitching, as well.

“Yeah, yeah, say whatever you want.”

Yuu seemed to take their words pretty harshly, as his face was still as red as before.

It was obvious that he was as embarrassed as Natsuki was.

’Haha. It’s all kind of heartwarming somehow.’

Pressing a finger to her face as it naturally broke into a smile, Akari gazed contently at the scene before her.

But Yuu soon turned in their direction next.

“Same goes for you, Hayasaka. And you too, Aida.”

“R-right!”

Both Akari and Miou answered at the same time when they were called out.

And just like you’d see in a manga, they even did a little jump on the spot.

“Aww, what a bully~ Yuu’s picking on the girls~”

“Don’t say that, Haruki. Yuu’s pretty traumatized from being scared like that too, you know.”

“Hmm, I don’t remember raising him to be such a scaredy cat, though.”

As Haruki and Souta joked around without restraint, even Natsuki joined in.

They were completely in sync as childhood friends.

“You know, it’s a real pain dealing with you guys fooling around so much on top of it all! Just let me focus on one thing at a time, would you?!”

“Setoguchi-kun kinda of reminds of a mom.”

“Ah, same here.”

Miou muttered, and Akari agreed in an equally quiet voice.

Both of them started laughing at about the same time. Yuu overheard them and pointed at Haruki and the overs accusingly, exclaiming, “See?”

“Even Hayasaka and Aida are fed up with you guys!”

“Yeah, yeah. Quit making that sorry face and say what you wanna say already.”

Although it was forceful, Natsuki had brought the conversation back on track, so Yuu took a deep breath before speaking.

Since Yuu had turned back around, Akari looked up at her classmate of 180 centimeters, feeling a bit nervous.

“I know you guys are worried, but we’re fine. Um, how should I say this…. Even though we’re dating now, we’ve always been childhood friends before this, so it’s hard to suddenly change. Well, I guess it’s more like I’m fine with how close we are now, so….”

Akari was stunned at how Yuu spoke so hesitantly.

Being someone who was so sensitive to other people, Akari knew that Yuu usually chose his words carefully when speaking. Paired with Natsuki, who was always straightforward about saying what was on their mind, Akari found them to be a good team.

’But…. Something isn’t right about this….’

Glancing over at Miou, Akari saw that she seemed lost, as well.

As for Natsuki, who was standing beside her, she was staring silently down at the floor.

‘Yeah, this is no good!’

Maybe she was just being nosy, but she couldn’t just stand and do nothing when one of her closest friends was so disappointed.

Taking a step forward, Akari stared up at Yuu, who was about to keep making excuses.

“Setoguchi-kun! Have you talked about this with Nacchan?”

“….Huh?”

Akari took Yuu’s surprise as a confirmation to her suspicions.

’I knew it! So he really /hasn’t talked with Nacchan….!’

Suddenly overcome by sadness, Akari was struck by an uneasy feeling in her chest.

“You should listen to what Nacchan has to say! Even if she doesn’t say it, I’m sure that Nacchan wants to eat lunch together with you. The same with walking home together after school, and holding hands…. Oh, and going to eat cake together sounds nice too!”

Akari blurted out as this great idea came to her, before coming back to her senses.

Natsuki, Miou, as well as all the guys, were quiet.

’Oh, how embarrassing….’

Feeling awkward now, Akari dropped her gaze to the floor.

’Was that too much? I mean, the second half was just full of things that I would want to do….’

“Yuu, that was a girl’s insight just now. Make sure you put it to good use.”

There was the sound of someone clapping Yuu on the shoulder, followed by Souta's voice.

Taking that as a cue, Haruki and Natsuki also began to chatter.

"So basically, don't hold back and go show off as a boyfriend."

"But if Yuu and I held hands in front of Haruki just because he said that…."

"He'd probably tell us off like, 'What're you guys being all flirty for?'"

While Haruki spoke seriously, Natsuki and Yuu joined together in teasing him.

"Yeah, exactly!"

"You two just don't get it, do you? Acting flirty with each other while everyone else makes fun of you is the best part, right?"

"Shut up, Mochita."

Again, both of them were perfectly in sync.

Encouraged by the lively voices around her, Akari slowly lifted her face.

From the looks on everyone's face, no one seemed at all unhappy right now.

In fact, they were all laughing and smiling cheerfully instead.

'Wh-what a relief….'

As she rubbed her nose, someone reached out to tug at the sleeve of her blazer.

Looking over, she saw Miou, who smiled wide and leaned close to whisper,

"Don't worry. I thought it'd be fun to hold hands walking home, or go on an after school date, too."

"….M-Miou-chaaan! I love you~!"

Unable to contain herself, Akari threw her arms around Miou in a hug, and for some reason, both Haruki and Souta looked alarmed.

Before she had any time to react to that, Akari felt a weight on her back.

"No faaaair! I love you girls too, you know!"

Seeing Natsuki's sulking face, both Akari and Miou couldn't help bursting out in laughter.

"Watch out, your girlfriend's already cheating on you."

"….That's fine. I'll just prove to them who's her real boyfriend."

"Woah! Go for it, Yuu!"

Hearing the conversation between Haruki and the others behind her, Natsuki's face turned beet red.

While on the brink of tears from happiness, Akari let go of her friend's hand, who still seemed to be having trouble being true to herself.

“Go on, Nacchan.”

“….Okay.”

Her voice was barely higher than a whisper, but she had definitely nodded.

After that, she took Yuu’s hand, and the two left the classroom together.

’They’re so dazzling…. Ah, is this what ‘hope’ is like?’

The missing piece that she’d been looking for so all this time had fallen right into her hand.

She clenched her hand into a fist as if to hold onto it, and moved quickly towards the door.

If she didn’t hurry and draw it now, she felt it might escape from her.

“Hold on, Hayasaka! Why don’t the four of us have lunch today?”

“….Huh? The four of us….?”

“Hayasaka, Miou, Mochita, and me.”

Pointing to himself at the end, Haruki flashed a toothy grin.

“I’m not so sure….”

Akari mumbled, almost as if talking to herself, causing Haruki to tilt his head in confusion.

“What’s wrong? Are you feeling unwell?”

As Haruki pushed for an answer, Akari pretended to glance at the clock on the wall to check on Miou.

‘Miou-chan looks troubled….’

Before, Miou would probably have happily accepted the invitation to eat together.

But ever since she had found out that Haruki had someone he liked, it seemed like she was trying to keep her distance from him.

That was why when Haruki greeted her the other day, Akari wound up accidentally ignoring him, as well.

Although the two weren’t dating, the way they walked home from school every day made it seem that way. If Haruki wasn’t aware of this, that just made things all the more difficult.

’Serizawa-kun seemed like he was struggling with how to act towards Miou-chan, and yet….’

“It’s like I’m suddenly the only one left out….”

Souta muttered out of the blue.

It was unclear who the statement was directed at, but it didn’t sound like it carried a very positive nuance.

Worried, Akari looked over at him, but when their eyes met, Souta smiled gently back.

’Did I just mishear that?’

Before she could ask to be sure, Souta wrapped an arm around Haruki’s shoulders.

“Sorry to disappoint you, Haruki, but we still have editing work to do on the movie. Since we told Yuu that we’d finish up the rest, we’ve got to keep to our word, right?”

“Ugh…. Can’t we at least have a lunch break….?”

“‘At least’? When we could be using this time to work, instead? Don’t underestimate how much you can get done during a lunch break! It’s valuable time, so let’s make the most of it.”

Souta grinned and pulled Haruki along before he had a chance to protest.

As the only ones left behind, Akari and Miou simply stood there in silence for a while.

“….Haruki-kun seemed really excited, huh?”

There was something melancholy about Miou’s words.

She might know the reason why Haruki had been in such high spirits.

Hearing this, Akari realized for the first time that that was the case.

“Ah! That’s right, weren’t you about to go somewhere, Akari-chan?”

When Miou spoke again, she was her usual self again, as if some switch had been flipped.

But as Miou looked up at Akari with eyes that glistened slightly, Akari immediately grabbed her hand.

“Miou-chan, why don’t we eat in the art room today?”

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

About a week after that, Akari was called to the Career Guidance Office after school.

Feeling reluctant, every step felt heavier than the last as she made her way over.

The school had asked her to help with a certain task, but she didn’t feel like she was very capable for it.

’I knew I should have turned them down, after all…. But even Eri-chan-sensei asked me to do it….’

No matter how slowly she walked, eventually she would reach her destination.

‘Now that I’ve come this far, I guess there’s no turning back. And besides, they said I wouldn’t be doing this alone!’

Akar took a deep breath outside of the Career Guidance Office, and bracing herself, she opened the door.

“H-Hello.”

“Hey, Hayasaka. So the other person was you, huh?”

“….Serizawa-kun….”

Haruki must have been looking out the window a moment ago, since he was standing by the window.

Seeing Akari enter the room, he moved away from the window and approached the long table in the center of the room.

“The teachers said they’d be late, so let’s go ahead and have a seat while we wait for them.”

“R-Right.”

Akari answered instinctively, but then realized how awkward the situation was.

’Maybe he isn’t bothered by what happened the other day, though….’

It was possible that Haruki had completely forgotten about Akari ignoring him before.

Akari hesitated about where to sit, before finally deciding on a seat directly across from Haruki.

Haruki folded his arms behind his head, and leaned his weight back on the chair in full-on relaxation mode. No matter where he was and who he was with, his behavior never changed.

’….But, he always seemed to be enjoying himself the most whenever he was with Miou-chan.’

Remembering what Miou had told her during lunch in the art room last week, Akari’s naturally lowered her gaze.

Once the two of them were alone, the tears had started pouring from Miou’s eyes. She must have been holding them back all this time, seeing how surprised she’d been at herself over how much she was crying.

”When I first heard that Nacchan started going out with Setoguchi-kun, I was really happy. I was genuinely glad for them….”

Miou bit down on her bottom lip, hesitating over her next words.

”Miou-chan, what’s wrong?”

”….I’m…. such a bad person. At first, of course I was happy that Nacchan got to be with the person she likes, but I…. I was also happy because that meant Haruki-kun wouldn’t be able to….”

Not wanting her to say anymore, Akari pulled Miou into an embrace.

If she were in Miou’s shoes, she probably wouldn’t be able to help thinking that way, either.

’When the person you like likes someone else, of course you won’t be able to cheer them on.’

But she knew that if she said that out loud, it would only make Miou cry even more.

In the end, all Akari had been able to do was stay by her side.

“I’m not sure how I feel about having photos of us on the pamphlets, though.”

Haruki talking to her suddenly brought Akari back to reality.

She blinked to bring her vision back in focus and saw Haruki resting his chin in palm of his hand unhappily.

“They said that the photos would be small, so I think it’s fine. I’m more worried about the interview….”

Perhaps due to Haruki’s laidback attitude, Akari found herself speaking without reserve, as well.

“Ugh, I forgot about that.”

As Haruki grimaced, Akari couldn’t help laughing a bit.

The school had asked them to be featured in a pamphlet that would be handed out to incoming students interested in enrolling at Sakuragaoka High.

”We want to show that our school is active in not only academics, but also the arts and other extracurricular activities. So that’s why we’d really like it if you would take part in this, Hayasaka-san!”

Matsukawa-sensei had said to her, but Akari was beside herself with worry.

She only kept drawing and participating in the Art Club because she liked it as a hobby. She had no idea what she was supposed to talk about to show off like the school wanted her to.

“Well, we don’t really have to think so hard about this. It’s not like we’re giving them advice on their entrance exams or anything. Let’s just show them the fun parts about high school and raise their motivation a bit.”

Upon hearing Haruki say the words that she had wanted to hear the most, Akari felt her uneasiness fade away.

And the way he gave her that carefree laugh made Akari’s heartbeat quicken.

’….Miou-chan, I’m sure I’m a much worse person than you are.’

There was something she was hiding from each of them.

She hid from Natsuki the fact that she had seen Haruki confess to her.

She hid from Miou the fact that she had found out who Haruki liked.

And she hid from herself….

“Hey, Hayasaka.”

Hearing Haruki call her name, Akari nodded with guilty, downcast eyes.

Haruki had corrected his sitting posture, and was staring straight at her.

There had been another time before that he’d looked at her with such seriousness it made her skin prickle.

It had been during the meeting they’d had before summer vacation in the Art Preparation Room.

”Say, what color do you think ‘love’ is?”

Haruki’s voice had been as casual as if he were only asking the weather that day.

But as he waited for an answer, his piercing gaze made for a strong contrast.

“Thanks for that picture.”

“….Huh?”

“You know, the picture with the cherry blossoms. The one you painted for our movie.”

With his tone, gaze, and words being so mismatched, Akari found herself at a loss for words.

Seeing Akari quietly shake her head, Haruki’s eyes softened a little.

“After seeing your picture, I changed the last scene. At first, I planned for it to end with their unrequited feelings. Both the heroine and her senpai having feelings for each other, but being unable to say them.”

“….What made you change it?”

Akari asked, but she had a feeling she already knew the answer.

A part of her was in denial, saying that couldn't possibly be the case.

But if it was just as she imagined, then—

"When you look at that picture, you just feel a certain way, you know? It's like you can see a ray of hope, and there's no way I could end it like a tragic love story after that."

The way Haruki said it made Akari want to cry. Like there was no other way to see it.

'My picture really was able to change the ending….'

And when he told her how he saw that "ray of hope," it felt like she'd found her way out of un unending tunnel.

That "ray of hope" had been what she'd been searching for for so long.

"….Hayasaka. It looks like you figured out what 'love' is."

As Haruki uttered these words, a variety of different emotions emerged in his expression.

Like colors; somehow sad, happy, bewildered, all of them blurred together, and then disappeared.

In the end, what remained was his sharp gaze again.

"If you had to choose between time to have a relationship or time to draw, which would you choose?"

Just like before, he pitched her a question.

Since no one else was here, she couldn't wait for someone else to answer first.

Akari closed her eyes, and answered with what she saw when she did.

"Before, I think I would have set aside everything to be able to draw."

"Oh? So what about now?"

"Now, I…. I want both."

Haruki widened his eyes, as if he hadn't expected this kind of answer.

"I thought that you would have definitely picked drawing. But that's all in the past now, right?"

'Serizawa-kun…. He seems kind of sad….? Or, more like he's upset?'

Maybe he thought that she didn't care much about drawing anymore.

Hoping that it wouldn't sound like she was just making excuses, Akari started to speak again.

"That question you asked…. Even if it wasn't between drawing and a relationship, I still don't think I would have only chosen drawing. Because drawing is already a part of me."

After Akari explained how drawing couldn't be compared to anything, Haruki muttered a quiet note of understanding before falling silent.

He looked away, scratched the back of his head, and laughed slightly.

“So we really *do* think the same way.”

Seeing that smile, Akari felt a pleasant feeling spread through her.

It was something that she’d never felt before.

’It’s strange. It makes me happy to be understood, but….’

The last time someone had agreed with her, it had felt more painful, like her heart was being clenched.

For instance—

“Yuu, that was a girl’s insight just now. Make sure you put it to good use.”

She recalled Souta’s voice from when they were in the classroom last week.

She hadn’t felt anything at the time, but now, for some reason, her chest started to hurt.

’Huh….? Huh? What is this feeling….?’

Akari felt like she probably knew the reason, the name of the bud that made her heart beat faster.

But she decided that she wouldn’t say its name aloud just yet.

There were still so many things she had to do before that.

“Seri…. Haruki-kun!”

“Y-Yes?”

Haruki answered with wide eyes, surprised by the sudden volume and being called by name.

’Come to think of it, Mochizuki-kun also said, ‘Aka…. Hayasaka-san’ once.’

Fondly recalling that memory, Akari looked straight at Haruki.

“Please be friends with me!”

A silence fell between them, and Haruki blinked several times in a row.

During that whole time, Akari held her gaze steady and continued to stare at him with her bright brown eyes.

“Um, but I thought we were already friends….”

The answer he gave her was a fairly anticlimactic one.

Akari felt all the strength leave her body, and slumped back to lean on her chair.

If she had told him this sooner, maybe things would have ended differently.

Akari shook her head from side to side, chasing away that passing thought.

’A lot of things happened, a lot of tears, and hurt feelings…. But because I didn’t give up despite all that, I’m standing here right now.’

“Eh? Wait, was I the only one that thought we were friends?”

“No, that’s not it…. Thank you!”

Akari said, with all sorts of emotions in her words.

This bud hadn’t been able to bloom, but that didn’t mean it had gone to waste.

She was sure it would become the strength for a new flower to sprout.

’I wonder why, but I really want to go and see Mochizuki-kun right now.’

With just a bit of space between them, they’d walk down the hill road to the station.

And then they’d go to the Hoshiya by the station, and share their favorite cakes with each other.

And then, someday—

A Solution for Jealousy (Epilogue)

renna-translations.tumblr.com/post/149818844204/a-solution-for-jealousy-epilogue

Thanks for waiting! Here's the final, epilogue chapter of the novel adaption of HoneyWorks' "**Yakimochi no Kotae (A Solution for Jealousy)**"! Enjoy!

Masterpost with links to all the translated chapters can be found here.
You can find the masterpost with all the Confession Executive Committee/Sound of Confession series-related translations here.

←Chapter 7

* If you can, I highly encourage supporting the creators by buying the book for yourself at Amazon!

——

With the end to Yuu's story being nowhere in sight, Souta forgot about even nodding now and then to show he was still listening.

Natsuki, who was sitting next to Yuu, was engrossed with chatting with Akari, who was sitting across from her.

'If only Akarin was sitting where Natsuki was, instead.'

As he thought about how he wanted to join in the conversation that he could hear bits and pieces of, Souta drank what little was left of his soup. Souta could almost see the bottom of his bowl, but as for Yuu, there were still some noodles left.

'At first, I was super happy about sitting next to each other, but I can't even really see her face like this!'

But he was too shy to bring up switching seats now.

Deciding to use his own power to make this situation even just a bit more bearable, Souta stared hard at Yuu.

"Um, Yuu?"

"And she even put on all this makeup, too. When I realized she looked different from usual, it felt really weird…."

"U-uh-huh."

Overcome by Yuu's assertiveness, Souta quickly fell back to taking the passive role in the conversation again.

"But she still wears my favorite hoodie as pajamas at home. She's already treating it like a hand-me-down, even though it's obviously men's clothing."

"Uh-huh."

"….Mochita, you're not even listening, are you?"

"Uh-huh."

The moment Souta realized he'd messed up, Yuu was already stretching a hand towards his forehead.

Unable to avoid in time, he took the flick to the forehead, which, naturally, made Souta retaliate.

"Hey, this is your own fault, you know? Talking on and on about Hina like that~"

Yuu's younger sister, Hina, was a first year at Sakuragaoka High School.

Among Souta and his childhood friends, she was very precious to them, and Haruki, in particular, loved to spoil her.

'Well, we're no match for her real older brother, of course.'

It wasn't like Souta wasn't interested in hearing about Hina, but there was a limit for everything.

Worst of all, even though Akari was here, the fact that he couldn't talk to her was just too much.

'I guess I have no choice but to say it clearly.'

Settling on this fact, Souta made an effort to speak calmly.

“Won’t she start to hate you if you’re too annoying?”

“No, /she’s the annoying one. Even when I’m busy studying, she’s always bugging me.”

He’d answered right off the bat. And gone straight back to talking about Hina, too.

’This is hopeless….’

Souta shot Natsuki a “please help me” look, but she only shrugged.

“I’ve already heard all of this before, so it’s probably Haruki’s turn after you.”

“Ugh! Was Hina putting on makeup really that shocking?”

“Yuu, the moment you started high school, you started buying different magazines and going to a different hair salon and things like that too, don’t you remember? Kotarou’s going through that same kind of phrase right about now.”

Natsuki shook her head as she brought up her younger brother, who was a first year like Hina.

Souta also vaguely remembered something similar, and couldn’t help laughing a bit.

“W-well, guys go through a lot during that time.”

“Girls do too, you know. That’s why Yuu’s probably worried that Hina-chan got a boyfriend or—….”

“No way!”

It was unclear at first whether he was denying the fact that he was worried or the fact that Hina had a boyfriend.

Before Natsuki could finish her sentence, Yuu cut in, shouting, “There’s no way she of all people could have one!” while holding his head in his hands.

“Even when women don’t have a reason for doing things, it’s said that men who try to seek a reason will suffer heartbreak.”

“Is that a quote from a movie?”

Souta had tried to sound solemn as he said the line, but he was shot down when Akari asked her innocent question.

“….Y-yeah. I haven’t seen the movie it’s from yet, but it was in a scenario book….”

’I shouldn’t have been so cocky saying that. She probably thinks I’m so lame now.’

Hesitantly turning to look at Akari, he was surprised to see her smiling at him.

“I see. Then would you like to go see it together?”

“O-of course!”

As Souta shouted together with a victory pose, Yuu said with a knowing face,

“Yeah, once you enter university, you’ll definitely be working part-time at an izakaya.”

“Ahaha, I bet Yuu and Haruki would be going there all the time.”

Hearing Natsuki’s cheery voice, Souta immediately looked over at Yuu.

He was sure that Yuu noticed, but was deliberately choosing not to look back.

That reaction confirmed Souta's suspicions.

'….Natsuki doesn't know about Haruki's study abroad.'

"Anyway, the ramen here is really good!"

"Yeah, it's too bad that Miou-chan and Serizawa-kun couldn't come."

Yuu and Souta were silent as the two lamented over the absence of their other friends.

The two of them didn't know anything about Haruki's study abroad, or the reason why Miou and Haruki weren't here.

There was a possibility that Miou didn't know, either.

Souta wasn't sure what was true anymore.

But he knew that his feelings of wanting his friend's relationship to go well were real.

'Good luck, Haruki….!'

As he sent that mental cheer of encouragement, black hair flitted into his vision.

"So, Mochizuki-kun, when should we go see that movie?"

The destructive power of Akari peering up into his face so innocently made Souta catch his breath.

'So cute! So unfair! But that's the best part! Wait….'

"Eh? When? We? Movie?"

"….Sorry, were you only joking about that?"

As Akari's shoulders slumped in disappointment, Souta frantically shook his head.

"N-no, of course not! I was serious, completely serious….!"

"Oh, you had me worried for a second."

He was relieved that Akari was smiling again, but he didn't like how the other two were shaking. It looked like Natsuki and Yuu were holding back their laughter at how desperate Souta had been.

'Laugh all you want! Just don't say anything.'

Souta ordered in his mind, glaring daggers at the two of them.

His childhood friends gave Souta a thumbs up each to show that they got the message.

'Don't make it so obvious! Akarin's going to catch on!'

Becoming worried, Souta glanced over at Akari, but she was busy looking for something in her bag.

"Ah, found it. Let's decide on a day."

As she spoke, Akari set her phone on the table. With a delicate finger, she navigated the screens and pulled up a scheduling app.

'Akarin, you're more serious about this than I am.'

Souta pinched his own cheek to make sure this wasn't a dream, causing his eyes to well up with tears of pain and happiness.

"O-oh, right! The movie theater by the station is doing a special romcom collection screening this weekend. There should still be tickets left. What do you think?"

Akari thought it over for a moment, then tilted her head slightly.

"….I'd like to watch anything *but* romcoms."

"EHHHH?!"

Souta's heartbroken cry echoed through the restaurant.

Akari giggled, while Natsuki and Yuu sighed with disappointment.

'How much longer am I going to keep making a fool out of myself….?'

The moment Souta laughed dryly, he felt a light tap on his shoulder.

"I'm free on Sunday afternoon."

Akari whispered to him, making Souta's face light up immediately.

"A-Akarin! I love you!"

The last person you want to talk to at the end of the day is surely the person you want as your lover.

As Souta remembered that line from his favorite movie, he basked in the happiness of having found such a person. It was painful to be in a one-sided relationship, but he was still happy to have found someone to have those feelings towards.

'I hope that one day, I'm the last person that Akarin thinks about at the end of the day.'

It would be a while before Souta learned that Akari had written the details of their movie plans in her phone under the title "Date."

Until the day that their feelings for each other were realized—